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STUDIES OF A BIOGRAPHER

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STUDIES OF A BIOGRAPHER

By LESLIE STEPHEN

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THE STORY OF SCOTT'S RUIN

MR. ANDREW LANG, in his *Life of J. G. Lockhart*, has succeeded, in spite of the want of adequate materials, in drawing a most interesting portrait. Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, though it made all readers love the subject, did not persuade every one to love the author. The man, indeed, who could display such reverent and loyal affection was certainly lovable; and yet he contrived to keep his own fine qualities in the background. Lockhart, in truth, was one of the men who are predestined to be generally misunderstood. He was an intellectual aristocrat, fastidious and over-sensitive, with very fine perceptions, but endowed with rather too hearty a scorn of fools as well as of folly. Circumstances had tempted him in early youth to give free utterance to his contempt, and occasionally, moreover, to forget that courtesy is due even to vulgar antagonists. In later life, the shyness,

due to a sensitive nature, was mistaken, as is so often the case, for supercilious pride, and the unwillingness to wear his heart on his sleeve for coldness and want of sympathy. Such men have to be content with scanty appreciation from outside, and Lockhart had to pass for an incarnation of the cynical variety of Toryism. Mr. Lang, it is to be hoped, has appealed successfully from the erroneous judgment hitherto too often passed. There is, however, one point upon which I am forced to think that he has been a little too lenient. It concerns Lockhart's controversy[1] in regard to the causes of Scott's financial difficulties. In the *Life of Scott* Lockhart had the very difficult task of accounting for his father-in-law's misfortunes, and it was of course to be expected that the other persons concerned should not be satisfied with the statement. If, indeed, he was not quite impartial, it is impossible to blame him severely for dealing a little too tenderly with the character which he so loved and honoured. Mr. Lang defends him, too, upon the ground that he had in his first

[1] *The Ballantyne Humbug Handled, etc.* (1839) is an answer to a 'refutation' of Lockhart's statements in the *Life* by Ballantyne's trustees. They made a 'reply,' to which Lockhart gave no answer.

edition told the story honestly, although, in the heat of controversy, he incautiously accepted a position attributed to him by his antagonists. Instead of replying, as he might have replied, 'You are only repeating my own admissions,' he tried to withdraw from the admissions which he had virtually made. There is, I think, much truth in this, though I cannot discuss the point. But I also think it impossible to read Lockhart's pamphlet without regret, not only because, as Mr. Lang of course agrees, its insolent tone betrays excessive irritation, but because it is really, if unintentionally, unjust to other persons concerned. The interest of the question consists chiefly in its bearing upon Scott's character, though Mr. Lang's main concern in the matter is of course with Lockhart. Having lately had occasion to go over the controversy with a view to an article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, I venture to say something of Scott's share in the matter. The shortest plan is to tell what seems to me to be the true story, from which it may incidentally appear how far it was slurred or softened in Lockhart's hands. That, however, is for me a matter of minor importance.

First, I must notice one difficulty. Mr. Lang

observes that he is not an adept in financial matters, and is unable to unravel the mysteries of complex accounts dealing with elaborate commercial transactions. I am certainly not more competent than he; but I do not think that any profound insight into the accounts is really necessary. We need only take for granted one little device which, when explained, as one's commercial friends are always glad to do, is rather of charming simplicity than mysterious complication. Scott wishes to borrow money. He gets the loan the more easily because he can say Constable will also be responsible: 'he will repay you if I can't.' The fiction is that Constable owes Scott a debt already, and that Scott can therefore hand over this debt to his own creditors. Meanwhile, the fact is that no such debt exists. Constable admits it because he accepts a reciprocal service from Scott. He borrows money, stating that Scott will be responsible. The credit of each therefore helps the other. But now, if either is unable to pay, the other has to pay the debts of both. This was what actually happened. Constable failed, and Scott found himself suddenly liable not only for his own debts, but for some £40,000 raised

by Constable. That, as everybody agrees, was the immediate cause of the catastrophe. The question is, who was to blame; and especially why Scott, who had been making an unprecedented income by his pen, and who had an independent income of his own, should have been borrowing large sums, and borrowing them in this undesirable fashion? That, again, is in general terms answered by obvious facts. Scott wanted money because he had set up as a landed proprietor, built a fine house, collected curiosities, and indulged in expensive hospitality. To understand the position, however, so as to apportion the responsibility, we have to look a little more closely at the previous history, which, though indicated, is mixed up with other matters in Lockhart's *Life*.

Scott, then, had formed a characteristic connection—characteristic because there never was a man who took greater satisfaction in helping a poor friend. To be a staunch patron of his followers and a staunch adherent of his leaders was an essential article in his ideal of manly duty, and his whole life is a series of such services. He had thus taken up James Ballantyne. They had met when they were both schoolboys and Scott already an accomplished spinner of boyish

stories. They had met again at a club which Scott frequented in his early days at the Bar. A little later Ballantyne set up as a printer, and was publishing a newspaper at Kelso. Scott then employed Ballantyne to print some of his early ballads. He showed the result as a creditable specimen of his friend's skill, and then suggested to Ballantyne to come to Edinburgh and take advantage of his good report. Ballantyne accordingly set up the 'Border Press' in 1802. The press speedily obtained a good character, and Scott, now beginning his literary career, was able to bring a steady flow of custom to his friend. So far the scheme was carried out successfully, and the printing business not only succeeded for the time, but attained permanent prosperity. It survived the ruin of Scott's fortunes and enabled Ballantyne ultimately to provide for his family. There was unfortunately one difficulty. Ballantyne had not sufficient capital for his trade, and was forced from the first to carry it on partly with borrowed money. How far he was incompetent as a man of business was afterwards matter of argument; but there can be no doubt that he was, as he himself admits, always embarrassed, and that he was regarded with distrust in business

circles. Scott had lent him money, but on a renewed application for help took (in 1805) a most unfortunate step. He thought it imprudent to lend more, but consented to become an unavowed partner in the business. Ballantyne gave employment in the firm to his brother John, a shifty, harum-scarum person, and the two Ballantynes became Scott's trusted agents and courtiers. Lockhart has drawn portraits of the Ballantynes so vivid that, after making allowance for some unintentional caricature, it is impossible to doubt that they are sketches from the life by a very keen observer. The nicknames 'Rigdum Funnidos' and 'Aldiborontiphoscophornio' are sufficient indications of Scott's own view of their characters. He saw and enjoyed their absurdities and weaknesses, but, in his tolerant fashion, liked them none the worse. It is all very well to have friends who tickle your sense of humour; but, in such cases, it is desirable to maintain a certain distance, and not to become responsible for their foibles. Scott, however, felt bound to stick by his clients through thick and thin. They came to be the intermediaries between him and the outside world. He had to be approached through his little court; and as they had their own

interests—and John at least was given to round-about intrigues—Scott's own reputation suffered from this indefinite and secret connection. Murray and Longman, instead of making a direct bargain with the author himself, had to negotiate through these inferior auxiliaries, and were far from pleased with their manœuvres.

There can be no doubt, too, that, as Lockhart says, the connection led Scott into practising concealments of various kinds in a way hardly worthy of his character. He had begun by communicating all his early works to his friends before publication. After this connection was formed he indulged in mystification. The great secret as to the *Waverley Novels* was in all probability really due to this. He had been annoyed by hearing that publishers thought that his name was becoming 'too cheap.' The later poems had not equalled the circulation of their predecessors. Scott had now begun to look at the matter from the publisher's as well as from the author's point of view, and probably thought that it might be as well not to risk injury to his fame by an unsuccessful attempt in a new line. He would at least wait till success or failure was decided. Once begun, the mystery was rather attractive than otherwise,

and it amused him to keep back the revelation. The whole system, however, put Scott in an unsatisfactory position, which soon became more marked.

In 1809 Scott took another step which made the situation far more serious. He was already connected in various ways with the great Constable, who had paid what was thought a fancy price for *Marmion*, had published Scott's great edition of Dryden, and was following it by the edition of Swift. Constable was also publisher of the *Edinburgh Review*, to which Scott had contributed many articles. But now Scott set up the firm of 'John Ballantyne and Co.' in direct competition with Constable. Jeffrey's review of *Marmion* in the *Edinburgh* and the offence taken by Scott at the language of Constable's partner are suggested as the special occasions of the breach. But there were other and deeper reasons. Scott's political zeal was at this time becoming militant. The beginning of the Peninsular war had stimulated party passions. It roused the Tories, who could now claim to be supporters of a patriotic uprising against military despotism. It alarmed the Whigs, who saw a boundless vista of new Continental complications, debt and taxation. The *Edinburgh Review* had

become unequivocably Whiggish, and just at this time excited Scott's warmest indignation by an article proving the utter hopelessness of this new military venture. He at once took up most energetically the scheme for starting the *Quarterly Review* as an antidote to the poison of the *Edinburgh*. He wrote articles for it himself, enlisted recruits on all sides, and soon threw down the gauntlet to his antagonist. His publishing project fell in with this scheme. The new firm would enable him to garrison Edinburgh and organise what literary faculty there might be in the Tory party. It would act in alliance with Murray, the publisher of the *Quarterly*, and it would publish an *Edinburgh Annual Register*, which should enable him to expound the true version of contemporary history. He has thus concocted, as he tells Morritt (January 1809), 'a grand scheme of opposition to the proud critics of Edinburgh.' The Whigs should no longer have it in their power to suppress wholesome literature. Besides defending the good cause, he would be able to help needy friends. Southey, for example, was to be the main historian of the *Register*. And then there were more purely literary purposes in which Scott was greatly interested. He had

already edited some valuable historical collections, and had further enterprises in hand. Here, unluckily, was a weak point. Although no one was ever better able than Scott to please the public taste, he was a curiously bad judge of their taste in literature generally. He judged other men's likings, as we must all more or less do, by his own. What interested him would interest them. He was fascinated by local ballads and the old antiquarian researches which threw light upon ancient manners and customs. The public was equally fascinated by the vivid imagery generated in his imagination when supplied with such materials; and he seems to have inferred that it must share his taste for the raw material itself. Acting upon this principle and upon his ardent belief in the talents of his friends, he undertook to publish masses of unsaleable literature. A huge dead-weight of stock presently accumulated in the warehouses of 'John Ballantyne and Co.' A ponderous *History of the Culdees*, written by a valued friend; a heavy volume of 'Tixall poetry,' which cost £2000; an edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, undertaken by a wandering German whom he most generously protected till the poor man's death; Miss Seward's *Poems*,

a burden which he had incurred from rather excessive civility to one of the early recognisers of his talent; these and other failures, encumbered the new firm. The new *Register* itself caused a loss of over £1000 a year; and, considering that the Ballantynes had insufficient capital and did not enjoy a good reputation for solvency, it is no wonder that the venture was in grievous difficulties after three or four years. By 1813 they were at the verge of bankruptcy. The cause, as James Ballantyne admitted, was clear enough: 'beginning in debt, without capital, and always heavily in advance.' Magnificent schemes with insufficient means are a very obvious short cut to ruin; and the only wonder seems to be that Scott managed to escape at the time. Scott, however, showed abundant energy as well as buoyancy and courage. He was obliged to consent to make an application to the rival against whom he had been, as he said, preparing his bombs. The personal quarrel had speedily blown over, and Constable now agreed to look into the books. It appeared that Ballantyne and Co. would become liable for about £15,000 within the next year, and that all their assets, if they could be realised, would be about equal to their liabilities. As, however, the times were

hard, it was necessary to get some temporary help. Scott applied to the Duke of Buccleuch, as the chief of his clan, and the Duke's guarantee enabled him to raise the necessary sum. But, further, it was decided that the publishing business must be given up altogether. The printing was substantially a sound business, and might still be carried on. Scott accepted the position. He set most vigorously to work to extricate himself, and, after a sharp struggle, with apparently complete success. He complained, and it seems quite justly, of the conduct of the Ballantynes. They had not looked things fairly in the face, and had kept both themselves and him in darkness. He reproaches them, but with good temper and with friendly assurances. The misfortune, indeed, appears to have been that he did not complain enough. He was too good-natured, or felt too strongly his own responsibility for the misfortunes of the firm, to break off all connection with business and make himself once for all independent.

The publishing business, however, was finally abandoned. John Ballantyne became an auctioneer, though Scott continued to employ him in negotiations with publishers. The masses of unsaleable stock were gradually disposed of in various

bargains for the sale of *Waverley Novels*, which began to appear in 1814; and it might be hoped that the whole disastrous muddle was finally at an end. John Ballantyne believed, in fact, that this result had been achieved. He says, in a memorandum quoted by Lockhart, that, owing to the 'consummate wisdom and resolution' of the first partner, the business had been finally wound up with a balance of £1000 to the good. Scott himself supposed that the toils were fairly broken. He was before long able to return the bond to the Duke of Buccleuch, and thought that the embarrassments were finally over, and that he had a right to spend freely the large income which was now beginning to flow in from the *Waverley Novels*. Even at the worst, it must be added, Scott could still say at this time that no man could ultimately be a loser by him. He had an independent income and unencumbered property. A bankruptcy would have been serious and discreditable, but even in that case all his creditors would have been ultimately paid.

This, then, was the end of the first act of the drama. If John Ballantyne's statement could be accepted, the result would be that Scott had finally got rid of his publishing encumbrances.

He had engaged in dangerous speculations, and could not be acquitted of rashness. But he had saved himself and his partners, and had never got entirely beyond his depth. The printing business appears to have been bringing in at a later time a profit of nearly £2000 a year, and involved no speculative risks. Unfortunately, there was a sequel. Lockhart tells us that John Ballantyne was under a delusion, and that, when the publishing was abandoned, the printing business, which had got inextricably mixed up with it, took over debts to the amount of £10,000. It is not easy to make out how far this statement is admitted by the other side. Anyhow, such a debt might easily have been extinguished by a man who was soon making £8000 a year by his novels, besides having an independent income. To explain the catastrophe which followed, we must first observe the facts which came out in Lockhart's controversy with Ballantyne's trustees. In 1816 James Ballantyne wished to marry, and the young woman's relations said that he ought to show that he was clear of debt. Hereupon Scott agreed that Ballantyne should give up for a time all his interest in the business, and should henceforth be employed as a manager with a fixed salary

of £400 a year. During the following six years, therefore, 'Ballantyne and Co.' meant really Scott himself. He was the sole proprietor, and had, of course, a right to do with it whatever he pleased. In 1822, however, a new arrangement was made. Scott agreed to take Ballantyne again into partnership in the business of which he speaks as 'now so flourishing.' The profits were henceforth to be equally divided, Scott's influence and custom being regarded as equivalent to Ballantyne's labour as a manager. The partners were only to draw moderate sums, so that the debt might be extinguished. This debt, however, implies a remarkable state of things. Scott, in a document called a 'missive letter,' which shows his thorough familiarity with the facts, agrees that he is to be personally responsible for the bills due at that time by the firm. They then amounted to something like £30,000. Between this time and the crash at the end of 1825 the debts had increased to about £46,000. This debt, increased by the additional liability caused by Constable's failure, brought about Scott's ruin; and the problem remains—who was responsible for the accumulation? On one point, of course, there can be no dispute. If Scott had shown the

same prudence during the later period as he did during the first crisis, he would have freed himself from all difficulty. He chose, that is, to spend his income, when he ought to have been paying off his debts. He had, it is true, his landed estate to show for it, and although, as Lockhart tells us, he had been induced to pay extravagant prices, he might take this to be a good investment. But, in point of fact, he seems to have been curiously unaware that he was incurring any risk; and the settlement of Abbotsford upon his eldest son in 1825, which, if valid, put the property beyond the reach of his creditors, would have been inexcusable if any such alarm had occurred to him.

Now Lockhart's *Life* goes to suggest the theory against which Ballantyne's trustees really protested. The immediate cause, according to Lockhart's view, was Ballantyne's shiftlessness and incapacity. Ballantyne was, says Lockhart, an excellent reader of proofs, and made many valuable literary suggestions to his great friend. But he was also a muddle-headed and lazy man of business, who never looked into his accounts or made out a genuine balance-sheet. When bills became due he met them by drawing fresh bills, and never troubled himself about the ultimate

result. Therefore, it is to be inferred, that unfortunate nest-egg of debt, which was left when the publishing business was wound up, continued to accumulate by a kind of automatic process. If I never look into my affairs, allow all my subordinates to go their own way without check, and always pay my debts by fresh borrowing, it is very easy to understand that my liabilities will increase, apparently of themselves. Meanwhile, one has to ask, what was Scott doing? Lockhart admits, or rather asserts, this to be a puzzle. Scott, he says, was in his domestic affairs the most businesslike of men. He kept minute accounts of details, and could have told you all that he spent upon turnpikes for the last thirty years. Yet, either 'occupied with his romantic creations,' as Lockhart once ventures to suggest, or absorbed in building, planting, and entertaining, he passively allowed Ballantyne to go on piling up this ruinous burden. This, we must add, is the more surprising when we remember Scott's energy in dealing with his previous difficulties. Then he had set to work like a man, administered most excellent advice to his partners, and by judicious management regained a position of practical independence.

This gives the real issue between Lockhart and Ballantyne's trustees; and here I may confess to being not quite clear as to the meaning of the financial statements. The first point is the debt of some £30,000, for which Scott undertook the personal responsibility in 1822. How did it originate? On Lockhart's theory, it was entirely the result of the original debt incurred by the publishing concern, which had been taken over by the printing concern and had been allowed to accumulate under Ballantyne's ineffectual management. On the theory of Ballantyne's trustees, on the contrary, that debt had been completely extinguished; and the accumulation of debt was simply due to Scott's expenditure upon Abbotsford. I cannot discover that either statement is proved by definite figures; but there are some obvious difficulties in accepting Lockhart's version, and a brief consideration of them seems to make the case tolerably clear. In the first place, Scott obviously and admittedly wanted money. In the middle of the early crisis he had begun his purchases of land. They had no doubt seemed justifiable because he had at the same time tapped the great spring of wealth opened by *Waverley* (1814). During the

eleven years which succeeded he achieved the intellectual feat which still commands astonishment. All the great novels had been produced in that brief period. While achieving this performance he was spending his new income with equal lavishness. If both the income and the expenditure had been in hard cash, the proceeding might have been justified. Unfortunately, neither was true. He received for some of his copyrights bonds which were never actually paid off; and he had to raise new loans in order to buy new land, build his house, and carry out improvements. The result was an intricate network of engagements, through which it is not wonderful that a man who was all the time regularly doing his official duties and engaged in every kind of social amusement, did not clearly see his way. It is a marvel that he found time for half his occupations, and no wonder if time was wanting for a clear appreciation of his financial position. Meanwhile, it is also clear that he might naturally raise some of the sums required upon the credit of the printing-office. It was entirely, as we have seen, his own concern from 1816 till 1822, and he had therefore a perfect right to raise money for his own purposes

in the name of 'Ballantyne and Co.' Ballantyne's trustees ask, in fact, a question to which, as Lockhart never answered their 'reply,' we cannot tell what answer he might have given; but it seems sufficiently conclusive: why, that is, should Scott have acknowledged himself to be personally responsible for the debt of 1822, unless he were aware that it had been incurred for his own use? The careful document, in which he describes the state of the obligations between himself and James Ballantyne, shows his precise knowledge of the case, and no disposition to abandon any claim which he really had upon his partner. Debts due to him from Ballantyne are clearly set out, and the means of repayment carefully prescribed. It seems to be impossible to suppose that Scott should have taken this debt upon his own shoulders exclusively, if he had thought that it was caused by Ballantyne's careless management.

But, in the next place, it is equally impossible to hold that the debt had been incurred without Scott's knowledge. The imaginary pictures of Scott absorbed in 'romantic creations' and allowing Ballantyne to arrange all the bill-discounting, is a bit of rhetoric which fell in with the conventional ideas of the poetic dreamer, but was

quite at variance with the reality.' Scott had plenty of romantic fancies, but they did not in the least prevent him from being also a keen man of business. The documents published by Ballantyne's trustees leave no doubt upon this point. He received regular accounts of the bills that were to fall due, and of the provision for meeting them. He asks for explanations, receives schemes of financial operations from the Ballantynes, and devises schemes himself. He goes into such minutiæ that upon one occasion he writes to Ballantyne, when enclosing some bills, 'Be cautious to fill up the dates with ink of the same description, for bankers look sharp to this!' It is impossible to hold that the man who could have an eye to such points was so innocent as to be unaware of the true nature of the transactions for which he was responsible. James Ballantyne was himself alarmed. 'When I reflect,' he writes to his brother, 'how many bills I have paid for Sir Walter Scott on verbal orders and mere notes, which I thought no more about, I absolutely quake for the aspect under which I might be considered were he to die.' There are transactions, he says, which he, as an ignorant accountant, could not explain, and he would have

to 'stand upon character alone.' Lockhart had indeed qualified his statement of Scott's ignorance by saying that, though cognisant of the general facts, he did not know how the proceeds of the bills were applied. This, as the trustees naturally reply, amounts to an abandonment of the case. It is plain that Scott was not only informed of what was being done, but actively directed, arranged, and suggested plans for carrying on the transactions. It is difficult, then, to suppose that Scott, when assuming the debt, did not actually admit that it was due to his own wants. It continued to accumulate after Ballantyne's acceptance of a partnership, and the question remains whether it was still caused by Scott's personal expenditure. Lockhart admits that in cases of emergency Scott might obtain an advance from the company. One such emergency, for example, was the purchase of a commission for his son. He declares, however, that Scott never failed, on receiving payment for a new novel, to replace the advances; and further declares that he showed 'anxious delicacy' when asking for such accommodation. The trustees, in answer to this, publish an account of the actual sums drawn from the business by Scott during Ballantyne's

partnership (1822-26). The statement, which is presumably authentic, includes such items as a sum of over £7000 for building at Abbotsford, £5000 for his son's commission, and near £900 to a wine merchant, and the general result is that 'Ballantyne and Co.' had paid on Scott's account, in the period of the partnership (1822-26), £15,000 more than they had received from him. Lockhart's assertion must therefore have a more limited meaning. After Scott had again taken Ballantyne into partnership he had of course no right to spend the money of the firm for his own purposes. When he obtained an advance he remained personally responsible, and he no doubt 'replaced' it by acknowledging the obligation in some form or other. The result would be, I presume, that Scott personally was debtor to the firm for a considerable sum, and, as things turned out, a bad debtor. It seems probable, indeed, to the ignorant in such matters, that in point of fact neither Scott nor Ballantyne had by this time any distinct understanding of their affairs; and that Scott might suppose himself to have replaced money when the effect of the complicated operations in which they were engaged might really be quite different. Ballantyne seems

also, as far as one can dimly discern, to have been drawing more money from the business than he should have done, for the trustees admit that he too was a sinner, though less of a sinner than Lockhart maintained, and far less of a sinner than his partner.

These facts, which seem to be indisputable, entirely dispose of the theory suggested, if not explicitly set forth, by Lockhart. Scott was not in the position of a mere passenger leaving the command of his ship to an incompetent commander. He was actively superintending and giving orders at every stage of a critical navigation. Nor was it his whole error that he spent his money as it came in without applying it to check the automatic growth of the debt which was swallowing up all the profits of the business. He was actually drawing funds from the business in order to carry on a system of unproductive expenditure. What is true is that, for some reason or other, he was strangely unconscious of the danger. Lockhart remarks that a letter which Scott wrote in May 1825, a few months before the crash, is 'as remarkable a document as was ever penned.' It was an emphatic and most judicious warning to his friend Terry against undertaking the management

of a theatre without sufficient capital. He insists upon the advantage of 'solid cash,' and the inevitable ruin of a business which is 'pinched for money' and 'gets into the circle of discounting bills.' Every word is precisely applicable to his own affairs, and we need only substitute 'publishing' for theatrical speculation to make it a sermon upon himself. Everything, indeed, shows that his misfortune came upon him as a stunning surprise; and the heroic spirit with which he afterwards sacrificed health and life in the effort to redeem his honour proves unmistakably that, if he was under a strange blindness, it was not because his transactions had lowered his moral sense. The explanation of his strange ignorance depends partly upon his relations to Constable. Constable was, as he fully believed, a man of solid wealth. Nobody supposed, he remarks in his *Diary*, that Constable's house was worth less than £150,000. There were 'great profits on almost all the adventures' and 'no bad speculations.' The impression was natural enough from the outside. Constable was not only energetic, but shrewd; and the schemes which he started ultimately succeeded and justified the soundness of his judgment. Now, if the opinion of his solvency had really been

correct, Scott's position would at least have been comparatively secure. He had, as he admitted, been indulging in expensive tastes; but Abbotsford had now been finished, and he might well suppose that he would not require to accumulate new debts, and could gradually put an end to the system of mutual accommodation. In fact, it seems that if Constable could have got safely through the great commercial crisis of 1825, Scott would also have surmounted his difficulties, as he had done in the old troubles of 1813-14. Constable, unfortunately, turned out to have been in a position similar to Scott's. He had from the first been carrying on his business with insufficient capital, and the profits of his successful speculations had been constantly eaten away by the discounts and interest on loans. He had got into intricate relations with his London agents, Hurst, Robinson and Co., who appear at the period of excitement to have been indulging in reckless speculations, and the consequence was that, when one of the three houses failed, the others collapsed like a house of cards. Scott had said that Constable was as 'firm as Ben Lomond.' What he took for solid rock really rested upon rotten foundations.

That Scott should have felt this implicit con-

fidence is sufficiently explicable. When the publishing business collapsed Constable had come to his help; and in a short time the former rival had become a close ally. They had a genuine regard for each other. Although their alliance did not imply purely altruistic motives, their interests were identical. Constable saw in Scott's writings the best of all his speculations. The *Waverley Novels* and the *Encyclopædia Britannica* were apparently the backbone of his business. He very naturally wished to monopolise the most popular and most fertile author of the day. He looked upon Scott as a perpetual fountain of popular literature, which could be so directed as to make the fortunes of both. He did everything to stimulate Scott's natural disposition to write. Scott himself thought that his best things were those which came most easily, and was perfectly ready to be stimulated. He was delighted to pour out novel after novel, and to bargain for new novels, yet unwritten and even undesigned. When he wanted more money to buy land, he was ready to take advantage of this easy method of providing funds; and Constable did not discourage him. He could pay for them at least in credit, and was always ready to propose new enterprises. He gave Scott £1000

for *Halidon Hill*—a trifle turned out in two rainy mornings—rejoiced in having made such a bargain, and suggested that Scott might add to his income by writing such a thing once a quarter. Scott, again, he observed, might make £6000 by an edition of the English poets, 'as an occasional relief from more important labours.' He was to edit Shakespeare with Lockhart, and was to contribute to the *Miscellany*, which was to be a perfect mine of wealth, as indeed it turned out to be in the main a judicious speculation. It was only in the last years that Constable seems to have reflected that even Scott might possibly overwrite himself; and even then he rather proposed that some of the energy might be diverted to other ends, such as history or editing, than that it should be diminished. A publisher, who was thus doing all in his power to stimulate the productivity of an author, would hardly be inclined to raise any difficulty as to advances or to encourage any doubts as to his own power of paying for the work to be done. Some two years before the crash he had become a little alarmed at the amount of floating obligations, and suggested to Scott the advisability of reducing the quantity of bills. Scott took the suggestion in good part, and proposed, though

apparently without carrying out the scheme, to take measures accordingly. Without attributing to Constable anything worse than an over-sanguine view of things, it is obvious how Scott would inevitably be affected. Here was the 'Napoleon of publishers,' the shrewdest of speculators, the most solid, steady, and respectable of men, constantly asking for more. Why should he ask for more? The answer which would suggest itself to any author would no doubt be—because he was making a good thing of it. Scott would take it for granted that all this eagerness and readiness to propose new work meant that the great publisher was growing as rich as he was, apparently at least, growing rich himself. No doubt, if Scott had been a man of business so far as to be behind the scenes of commercial transactions, he might have heard rumours suggestive of a different explanation. Constable's operations had apparently suggested doubts to competent observers in his own trade. Scott, however, had fifty other occupations, and it is not strange that his confidence in Constable's solvency was equal to Constable's confidence in his literary capacity. One of the assumptions which he took to be certain was thus altogether fallacious, and the danger was sprung upon him from

the quarter where he supposed himself to be absolutely safe.

I suggest this, of course, not by way of justifying, but of partly explaining, Scott's illusions. He had been led into the original business by a generous wish to serve a friend. Gradually this had expanded into the grand scheme for putting himself at the head of a great house which should encourage authors, diffuse sound literature, and disseminate sound political doctrine. When his curious want of appreciation of public taste, and his trust in men of inferior education and character, brought him into apparently hopeless difficulties, he seems to have faced the crisis like a man, to have seen the real evils of the case, and to have extricated himself by sound judgment and firmness. Just at this moment, however, he 'struck oil,' if I may say so, by the publication of *Waverley*, and suddenly discovered that his brains would bring him wealth, and his wealth might place him in the ideal position of landed proprietor. Upon the morality of that ambition it is needless to dilate. Some people regard it simply as a proof of snobbishness or vulgar rapacity, the desire of an upstart for a fine house and showy establishment. With them I need not argue, if only because the answer is

given with admirable clearness in Lockhart's concluding chapter. He shows how Scott's whole life was moulded by the passionate desire to carry on the old traditions and preserve the ancient virtues of his race. Of course, he was in some degree an anachronism and Abbotsford a sham. That may be taken for granted, and enlightened persons may condemn him as a reactionary supporter of extinct prejudices. Only, allowing that the poor man held his convictions, we must also admit that he was not aiming at vulgar display, but at discharging what he took to be a most important social function: protecting his dependants, and supporting his superiors; helping innumerable poor friends and distressed authors; taking an active part in all patriotic movements, and diffusing the most genial goodwill throughout the whole circle of his influence. That this involved a certain 'worldliness,' and a curious mixture of the shrewd commonsense of the lawyer with the romantic visions of the enthusiast, is fully admitted by Lockhart, who also shows in general terms how it led to these financial embarrassments. But Lockhart's natural desire to shield Scott's memory involved here what seems to me a misrepresentation of the facts. The curious com-

bination, that is, between the romantic and the business elements shows itself in a way which Lockhart has to ignore. Scott, he says 'studiously escaped from whatever could have interfered with his own enjoyment'; put, that is, both his official business and his bill transactions out of his mind in order to retire to the world of the *Waverley Novels*, or to throw himself into social distractions.

This theory, though we may partly accept it, is pushed too far, if, with Lockhart, we take it to imply that Scott chose to remain ignorant of Ballantyne's conduct of his business. There it plainly conflicts with hard facts. The truth is, apparently, that Scott's romance took a peculiar turn. It implied, in particular, a very low estimate of the value of written romances. No great author ever had a lower opinion of the claims of authors upon the gratitude of mankind. It appeared to him, as we know, perfectly absurd to suppose that the writer of his 'bits of novels,' could be worth the attention of the hero of Waterloo. Ardently as he loved literature, he reckoned literature in general, and his own in particular, to be the harmless amusement of life, and only worth considering as an ornamental appendage. I suspect that his view has much

more to be said for it in many senses than authors will generally admit. Certainly, it often took the attractive form of personal modesty and of superiority to the fretful touchiness of the ordinary man of letters. Lockhart reports a conversation with Miss Edgeworth in which Scott spoke with deep feeling of the folly of thinking of real life as only material for art. He had, he said, heard 'higher sentiments' from the uncultivated than he had ever read in books; and he declared that authors would never learn their true calling till they had taught themselves 'to consider everything as moonshine compared with the education of the heart.' Miss Edgeworth's comment was that, whereas Swift professed to have written that 'people might treat him like a great lord,' Scott wrote that 'he might be able to treat his people as a great lord ought to do.' We may paraphrase this by saying that, in Scott's view the active duties of life were the substantive and the literary activity the mere adjective supplying the graces, or at most stimulating the affections, which had a more important function elsewhere. Miss Edgeworth's interpretation represents the better aspect of the doctrine. There is, of course, another application which is a good deal

more doubtful. Scott accepted with complete frankness the view that his own writings were to be entirely subordinate. No doubt, as they expressed his Toryism, his patriotism, his hearty appreciation of manly, independent, and domestic and social affections, they helped to propagate his ideal of life; but they were also distinctly and most avowedly written to sell. He wanted to live his romance more than to write it. The desire may remind us of Milton's doctrine that the man who would write an heroic poem should be 'himself a true poem.' Only, Milton lived in order to write *Paradise Lost*, whereas Scott wrote *Waverley* in order to live in his own fashion, and that fashion involved anachronisms not of the truly heroic kind. The result, too, was not what Lockhart implies. This romance did not take him away from the world of bankers' books and balance-sheets. On the contrary, it gave such a charm to the position which he desired, that he accepted them as a necessary, though no doubt a very disagreeable, part of the process. All the bill-discounting represented painful thought and recurring anxiety, from which we may well believe that he was glad to escape, whether to writing in his study or superintending Tom Purdie and his

labourers. Probably, too, it prevented him from making such an accurate investigation as would have roused him while there was yet time. But, clearly, the disagreeableness of the task did not prevent him from going into even the minute details and regulating all the ultimately ruinous negotiations. The end, unfortunately, sanctified the means; and he forgot his prudence in the delight of being able for a time to realise his fondest dreams. To himself, no doubt, it seemed that when he had got rid of the publishing house, the legacy which it left of unpaid liabilities was a mere remnant of botheration, which would be gradually wound up. The consummation was postponed from month to month as new temptations arose to invest his money at Abbotsford, and the mass of floating liabilities grew rapidly, though quietly, without prompting any sufficient effort at extrication. When he had once fairly finished his new mansion and rounded off his estates, he fancied that he would be able to shorten sail and bring all this intricate system of accommodation into order. The catastrophe at the end of 1825 destroyed all his chances, and led to that heroic effort which makes it seem almost indecent even to try to investigate the facts. Yet, on the

whole, it is as well to know the facts, even about a man whom one loves; and it seems to me that, though it is impossible for any one, as it certainly is for me, to unravel the details, the main results are sufficiently unmistakable.

THE IMPORTATION OF GERMAN

WHEN did Englishmen begin to learn German? That is a question upon which I have made some occasional notes, and I am glad to find it discussed in a book recently published by Mr. G. Herzfeld upon William Taylor of Norwich.[1] Mr. Herzfeld has made a thorough study of his author, and gives the result in a very interesting little book. He does not here go into the wider subject of the influence of the German upon (what we are pleased to call) the English mind; but he incidentally illustrates the process by describing one of the channels through which Englishmen were first informed of the existence of such men as Lessing, Kant, Goethe, and Schiller. Hereafter, it may be hoped, he will deal with other lines of influence. Meanwhile, I will venture, with Mr. Herzfeld's help and such other notices as I have gathered, to

[1] *William Taylor von Norwich: eine Studie über den Einfluss der neueren Deutschen Literatur en England.* Von Georg. Herzfeld. Halle, 1897.

make what contribution I can to this passage in literary history.[1]

It is a familiar fact that no Englishman read German literature in the eighteenth century. One sufficient reason was that there was no German literature to read. When philosophers such as Leibnitz and Wolff expounded their doctrines in French and Latin, when the great Frederick sat at the feet of Voltaire, and regarded his own literature as barbarous, foreigners could not be expected to qualify themselves for puzzling out the intricacies of an old-fashioned German sentence. The first-fruits of the independent German movement had no overpowering charm. I never read Klopstock's *Messiah* myself, but I am told by those who have, that if the perusal of that work were the sole reward of a victorious wrestle with German, the game might scarcely be worth the candle. Here and there we find men induced to go through the struggle. Early in the century the admirable William Law, of *The Serious Call*, studied German that he might translate the mystical works of Jacob Böhme, to whom he was attracted, as

[1] Mr. Herzfeld has been good enough to send me some notes of which I have taken advantage below.

in later years Coleridge was attracted by the mysticism of Schelling.[1] A very different man, the jovial, turbulent Carteret had—as Swift told him—carried away from Oxford more Greek, Latin, and philosophy than became a person of his rank. Moreover, as we learn elsewhere, he could talk French, Italian, and Spanish; and to this it is added that he went so far as to study German, 'to ingratiate himself with his Sovereign.' His contemporary Chesterfield possibly took the hint. I am not aware that he knew German himself; but he certainly impressed the importance of the study upon his son, and was pleased to hear that the young man—if his manners might still be improvable—could talk German perfectly. The average English nobleman probably knew French then as well as he does now. Voltaire declares that Bolingbroke—one of whose early essays was published in French—spoke French with unsurpassed energy and precision. The young nobleman on his grand tour was easily admitted with his tutor to French society, and it is enough to mention the names of Horace Walpole, Hume, and Adam Smith, to suggest the importance of the relations which sometimes

[1] Law's translation, however, was not the first.

sprang up. But even in German Courts the travellers needed no German; and the home-staying British author remained in absolute and contented ignorance. Macaulay remarks that the members of Johnson's Club were ignorant of the very existence of Wieland or Lessing. Johnson knew no German, although he twice took up 'Low Dutch' in order to satisfy himself that his power of learning had not decayed. From a talk at the club (3rd April, 1778) recorded by Boswell, we find that Johnson had discovered that 'stroem' is allied to 'stream,' and that Burke had recognised 'rosebuds' as the equivalent of 'roes-knopies.' Neither of them makes a reference to 'High Dutch,' and the philological knowledge implied is of the shallowest. Boswell, who had studied at Utrecht and gone to Berlin, apparently did not take, or he would surely have recorded, any part in the talk. We may infer that he was equally ignorant, though it is strange to think of Boswell in a country where he could not report a common conversation. Gibbon is, of course, the typical instance of this ignorance. He was not a man to shrink from study; he had travelled in German Switzerland, he began a history of Switzerland, and in later years he wrote upon the

antiquities of the House of Brunswick. Yet it never seems to have occurred to him that it was even possible to learn German, and his only resource was to obtain from his friends translations of the necessary documents.[1] Robertson, who with Gibbon and Hume made up the triumvirate of leading historians, could also write upon Charles v. without, I believe, any knowledge of German. It would, I imagine, be difficult to find a single direct reference to a German book in the whole English literature of the eighteenth century. As the century draws to an end, indications of an interest in the language crop up occasionally. Watt, of the steam-engine, learned German in his youth, to be able to read some scientific treatise, and revived the knowledge for the amusement of his old age. When Horne Tooke, retiring for a time from political agitation, made his shrewd and eccentric dash into philology, he saw the importance of some knowledge of the Teutonic languages. The references, however, in *The Diversions of Purley* seem to imply that, though

[1] Gibbon, as Mr. Herzfeld writes to me, must have learned something of the importance of German literature from the poet Matthison, whom he met at Lausanne in his later stay there. Their conversation is noticed in the *Monthly Review* for 1797 (vol. xxiii. p. 522, etc.).

he had learned something of Anglo-Saxon and Gothic, he knew little of modern German. The most remarkable case, perhaps, of an early study of German is that of Herbert Marsh, the Bishop of Peterborough. He had gone in 1785 to study at Leipzig after finishing his Cambridge course; and brought back a knowledge of the language which must have been almost unrivalled. In 1801 he published a tract written, it is said, 'in pure vernacular German.' It brought him the patronage of Pitt, whose policy it defended, and gave him, it seems, his first step towards a bishopric.[1] Other results of his German studies might rather have checked his preferment. He gave lectures at Cambridge before the end of the century, influenced by the teaching of Michaelis. They dealt with 'the origin and composition of the first three Gospels,' and, according to Mark Pattison, show the only trace at that period of 'honest critical inquiry.' The seeds, however, remained barren when transplanted to British soil, and Pattison complains in 1861 that English divines were still unable to appreciate the method. Marsh was suspected of heterodoxy, but amply vindicated

[1] Marsh, as Mr. Herzfeld tells me, contributed two political articles in German to Wieland's *Teutscher Merkur* in 1798.

himself and made himself known in later years in certain smart controversies, where he horrified the Evangelical and the Bible Society by arguing that the use of such edged tools as Biblical criticism should be reserved to orthodox experts.

In the last half of the century, however, many who were neither critics nor men of science were beginning to be interested in German. The translator had long been one of the proverbial denizens of a bookseller's garret. Johnson and Goldsmith had both toiled in that lamentable prison-house. Voltaire, Rousseau, and their compatriots had been speedily done into English, and the existence of a new field for exploitation began to be recognised. The German literature at its start was profoundly influenced by English models. That 'heavenly book,' *Clarissa Harlowe*, for instance, was welcomed by Mrs. Klopstock's charming homage as warmly as by any of the incense of Richardson's domestic circle. How deeply many famous Germans drank from English sources is matter of familiar history. The compliment was now to be returned. Mr. Herzfeld has collected many illustrations. Gessner's *Death of Abel* was translated in 1761, and twenty editions appeared by 1799. Klopstock's *Messiah*

was first translated in 1763, and one of Wieland's dialogues in 1771. Other translations from Wieland came out before 1796, when Sotheby's well-known translation of *Oberon* was published. Haller's philosophical romance, *Usong*, was translated in 1772. Lessing was first made known by his *Fables* in 1773. *Nathan* followed in 1781, and *Minna von Barnhelm* was adapted for the stage in 1786. *The Sorrows of Werther* reached English readers in 1779, and its popularity was shown by numerous translations and adaptations. During the last decade of the century there was a flush of enthusiasm for German literature, of which I shall presently speak. Englishmen seem to have suddenly become aware of the great literary movement in Germany; and possibly the war with France had some tendency to turn the British mind towards our Continental allies.

In the year 1792 Schiller's *Robbers* was translated by Fraser Tytler (Lord Woodhouselee), and the fact marks an important movement at Edinburgh, then almost the chief literary centre in Britain. Tytler encouraged Scott's early studies of German, and had apparently been himself started in that direction by Henry Mackenzie, the 'Scottish Sterne' (a sadly significant title!),

author of *The Man of Feeling*, and the great link between the two generations of Hume and Adam Smith on one side, and Scott and Jeffrey on the other. In 1788 Mackenzie read a paper before the Royal Society of Edinburgh, giving an account of the German theatre. The German theatre was at the time known to him only through French translations; but his paper had at least one important effect: it had a serious influence upon the career of Scott. Scott was then only sixteen; but his curiosity was aroused, and about 1792, as he has told us, he, with some friends, formed a little society for the study of German. The lads engaged a Dr. Willich (of whom I should be glad to know more) as a tutor. Scott reports that poor Willich had a noisy and irreverent class; they laughed instead of weeping at Gessner's *Death of Abel*; and Scott at least showed a lordly indifference to grammar, and worried his way into some understanding of the language by main force. Willich, I suspect, considered that his most promising pupil was Mr. John MacFarlane, who took to the study of philosophy while the rest went off to literature. MacFarlane lived till 1848, but does not appear to have made much of the philosophy. His life,

at least in a biographical dictionary, gives no traces of any such result. Willich had himself attended Kant's lectures, and soon afterwards published a book or two intended to indoctrinate Britons. What became of him I do not know, but one hopes that he had not to support himself by teaching Kant.[1]

The history of the actual introduction of German philosophy lies beyond me; but a few external facts may illustrate the difficulty of that performance before we look at the purely literary movement. In those days philosophy in Great Britain was pretty well confined to the Scottish professors. The rising genius of the period was Thomas Brown, six years younger than Scott, but a singularly precocious youth. At the early age of four, so his biographer declares 'on most satisfactory evidence,' he was found comparing the Gospel narratives to test their consistency. At twelve or thirteen he was publishing a poem in a magazine; at sixteen arguing a psychological

[1] Mr. Herzfeld informs me that Willich was physician to the Saxon Ambassador, Count Brühl, who passed more than 30 years in England. The Count's daughter, Dorothy, married Hugh Scott of Harden, and it was probably through her influence that Willich went to Edinburgh. He wrote a life of Kotzebue, published as an Appendix to Miss Plumptre's translation of *Lover's Vows*; and a translation of Hufeland's *Makrobiotik*.

question with the great Dugald Stewart; and by twenty publishing a confutation of Darwin (Erasmus, not Charles). Such a youth was made to be an Edinburgh Reviewer. Brown was an exceedingly able man, and might have made a greater mark but for an unfortunate impression that he could eclipse Pope's poetry as well as Kant's philosophy. The second number of the *Review* contains his judgment of Kant. I dare say that it may be as good as some more ponderous lucubrations on the same theme. Anyhow, it shows that happy audacity which makes a modern critic's mouth water. Nobody is now allowed to touch upon Kant without swallowing a preliminary library. In those happier days the critic did not even profess to have read the original. An amiable and excellent Frenchman, Charles Villers, had been driven to Göttingen by the French Revolution. There he had fallen in love with the country and its philosophy, and had published a 'luminous analysis' of Kant in 1801 for the benefit of Frenchmen. This account was quite enough for Brown, who was thus enabled to put Kant in his proper place with the infallible judgment of a reviewer of those pleasant days. A contemporary account of

Kant's doctrines is given in the edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of the same period. The Editor had found it necessary to call in a German refugee to throw light upon that mysterious topic. The refugee did his best; but the Editor would not be responsible for inoculating the British mind. Kant's opinions, as he sarcastically observes in his own person, are not very likely to reach posterity: our own countrymen will not prefer the dark lantern of Kant to the luminous torch of Bacon; and as Kant's works have a manifest tendency to atheism, it is not to be regretted that they are already much neglected in Germany, and will probably soon fall into utter oblivion. There are moments in which the superabundant zeal of later commentators tempts one to wish that they had.[1] What that refugee thought of his Editor must be unknown; but another quaint illustration of the sufferings of early Kantians is significant. There lived in London at this time a jeweller named Thomas Wirgman.[2] De Morgan, in his *Budget of Para-*

[1] The Editor was George Gleig, afterwards Bishop of Brechin. The article is substantially reproduced in Chalmers's *Biographical Dictionary*.

[2] I should be very glad to hear more of him. His father or grandfather probably kept the well-known toy-shop in St. James's Street, where Johnson bought silver buckles in 1778.

aoxes, describes him as 'cracky and vagarious and an 'itinerant paradoxer.' 'I 'll make it clear to you,' he said one day to De Morgan. 'Suppose a number of goldfishes in a glass bowl. Well, I come with my cigar and go puff, puff, puff over the bowl until there is a little cloud of smoke. Now tell me, what will the goldfishes say to that?' 'I should imagine,' replied De Morgan, 'that they would not know what to make of it.' 'By Jove!' said Wirgman, 'you are a Kantian!' I guess that Wirgman's report of the conversation would have been different. Wirgman seems to have been a man of real acuteness, and wrote certain expositions of Kant which, as good judges have said, show real comprehension. They are partly to be found in a work called the *Encyclopædia Londonensis*, which I take to have died in competition with superior rivals. From a separately printed copy of Wirgman's contributions, I take an account of the poor man's attempts to make converts.

Wirgman had been taken in 1795 by his friend H. J. Richter[1] to hear some lectures upon Kant

[1] Richter was a water-colour painter of German origin, who in 1819 published a book called *Daylight*, expounding Kant, and giving a 'discovery in the art of painting.' I have not seen it.—See *Dictionary of National Biography*.

by Professor Nitsch, who in the following year published a 'general view' of the philosophy. Wirgman became an enthusiast; he learned German, studied all Kant's works, and found that, among other merits, their clearness made them especially suitable for the rising generation. He taught their philosophy to his own boys when they were fourteen, and wrote his essay for the *Encyclopædia* in 1812. Feeling, however, that he was, as he said to De Morgan, only an 'old brute of a jeweller,' he sought for a worthier interpreter. Who, he asked himself, was the first metaphysician in the country? Obviously that 'elegant and accomplished scholar,' Dugald Stewart. Stewart was the light of Edinburgh; of him even the Edinburgh Reviewers spoke respectfully, and to him the Whig nobles sent their sons to be brought up on sound principles. Stewart, moreover, had just announced his intention of completing his *Analysis of the Intellectual Faculties.* To Stewart, therefore, Wirgman sent a copy of his own work. It was intended to show the great man that the task which he was attempting had been definitively achieved in Germany thirty years before. Stewart — as Wirgman assumed—being a philosopher, and

therefore devoted to truth exclusively, would naturally be delighted at finding himself eclipsed, and would at once become an effective propagator of Kantism. If, however, he felt any doubts, he could note them on the blank pages of Wirgman's treatise, and have them satisfactorily solved. Alas! Stewart replied, 'with the greatest politeness,' that he had not time to read Wirgman. Wirgman, rebuffed for the moment, returned to the charge; when poor Stewart explained, still with the utmost politeness, that, 'at the age of three-score,' he could not be bothered with new systems of philosophy. Wirgman derived a slight consolation from interviewing Madame de Staël when she came to England in 1814. She had written upon Kant in her book on Germany (1813), but confessed that she must leave metaphysical minutiæ to 'plodding reasoners.' She agreed, however, to bestow 'a few instants'—probably they had to be more than a few—upon Wirgman, and was curious to know from him what progress Kant was making in this 'commercial country.' The answer must have been discouraging. In 1816, however, Stewart published another essay, and now said that he had tried Kant in the Latin version—he knew

no German—and had 'always been forced to abandon the undertaking in despair, partly from the scholastic barbarism of the style, and partly from utter inability to unriddle the author's meaning.' Wirgman would not yet give him up, though deeply grieved. Another appeal to Stewart brought more 'politeness,' and a promise of a subscription to a projected translation by Wirgman. The old gentleman, however, was incorrigible. In 1821 his offences culminated. He gave in his *Dissertation* what professed to be an account of Kant; but it was worse than nothing. He had read Willich, and Nitsch, and Madame de Staël, and toiled at certain Latin treatises; he had even quoted Wirgman politely in 'Note ZZ,' but he could still see nothing in Kant except old errors clad in a new jargon. Poor Wirgman laments in vain, appeals to the love of truth, and deplores the hopeless blindness of the prejudiced old professor; but his lamentations excited no attention. The highest compliment that he ever received, according to De Morgan, was from James Mill, who told him that 'he did not understand Kant.' It was, says De Morgan, 'a feather in Wirgman's cap,' that such a man as James Mill should think this worth

saying. Alas! the grammar leaves it rather doubtful whether the saying was that Mill himself or that Wirgman did not understand Kant. Probably Wirgman was meant, as Mill thought himself capable of seeing through most things—Kant's philosophy included. With Stewart, finally, we may couple his friend and admirer, the great Dr. Parr. Parr had sent him a note upon the etymology of the word 'sublime.' It is abbreviated in Stewart's works, because it would have filled 250 pages. Parr, however, though a monster of erudition, knew no German, and gave up Kant from the irksomeness of reading through an interpreter.[1] Obviously, nothing short of the proverbial surgical operation could have got Kant into the heads of these worthy persons.[2]

Kantism, it seems, had not made much progress in this 'commercial country.' It had, however, excited a certain alarm. In 1814 Mrs. Hannah More was terrified by a report that a Kantian Club

[1] Parr's Works, i. p. 712.

[2] Thomas Beddoes (1760-1808) the chemist, father of the author of *Death's Textbook*, had taught himself German, and is mentioned, as Mr. Herzfeld tells me, in the *Teutscher Merkur* as interested in Kantian philosophy. Beddoes was a friend of Coleridge, Southey, and Davy, in the Bristol days, and probably helped to stimulate Coleridge's curiosity as to German.

had recently existed in London.[1] Kantism, as she surmised, meant some sort of poisonous doctrine, probably more or less connected with the teaching of Paine and Cobbett, whom she had encountered in *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* and other edifying works for the use of the poor. A defence of Kant, by Wirgman's friend Richter, appeared in *The Morning Chronicle* of 1814. Richter declared that 'morals and religious faith' had, through Kant, at length found a 'sanctuary in the human mind,' whence no scepticism could ever displace them. Let us hope that Mrs. Hannah More was comforted. Possibly the report to which she refers was in some way connected with Coleridge, who was making his last pathetically feeble attempt to support himself by lectures and journalism in London. The men who were to be his disciples were already studying German criticism and philosophy; and it is rather curious that Wirgman makes no mention of him. *The Friend* (1810), little as it had circulated, had made his claims as a philosopher known in most influential circles. But Coleridge's influence in this direction belongs mainly to the rising generation. He had gone to Germany in 1798, chiefly

[1] Roberts's *Hannah More*, iii. p. 423.

with a view to qualifying himself as a philosopher; and the fact illustrates the vague simmering of an interest in German speculation, which showed that the labours of Willich and Nitsch were not altogether thrown away. The beacon on Highgate Hill was only lighted in the later years of Wirgman's propaganda. Coleridge must, of course, be regarded as the main channel through which German philosophy began to influence Englishmen. Other names would have to be mentioned in a history of the subject. Mackintosh took Kant and Fichte with him to India in 1806, and De Quincey had studied German before his introduction to Coleridge. But it was Coleridge, whose singular power of stimulating other men, even by fragmentary and irrelevant disquisitions, first spread the notion that a profound esoteric knowledge lay hid somewhere in the mysterious depths of German philosophy. He helped himself, as we know, a little too freely from that source. The magical poetry which he produced during his brief period of 'flowering' was, happily, his own beyond all dispute. Yet in one way Coleridge, too, illustrates the influence of German poetical literature in the early period.

This, however, takes us back to Scott. Scott's

imagination had been stimulated by all manner of congenial reading; in his boyhood he had read *The Faerie Queen*, and *Ossian*, and Ariosto; he knew Percy's *Reliques* by heart, and had been from infancy saturated with Border legends and ballad poetry; and had dabbled in 'Anglo-Saxon and the Norse sagas' before Mackenzie's paper introduced him to German. The revelation of the existence of a great literary movement among a people allied to us both by blood and taste, who reverenced Shakespeare and revolted against Racine and Boileau, was naturally most stimulating, and gave a sanction to his spontaneous home-bred tastes. His first actual plunge into poetry was made in 1796, when Miss Aitken repeated in Dugald Stewart's house a translation, by William Taylor, of Bürger's ballad *Lenore*. Scott, though not present, heard how the society had been 'electrified.' He did not rest until he had got a copy of Bürger's poem. He sat down after supper, and finished his translation at daybreak. The enthusiasm was shared by others, including the Laureate Pye, and when Scott published his ballad (with *The Wild Huntsman* added) he found rivals in the field; and this, his first book, was a failure. He took, however, to translating German

undauntedly; attacked *Götz von Berlichingen* and Schiller's *Robbers*, and wrote *The House of Aspen*, adapted from a German play about the Vehm-Gericht. Ballads, however, were more to his taste than dramatic poetry, and at this point he came into contact with another author, whose fame has long faded. Matthew Gregory Lewis is chiefly known at present by vague memoirs of *The Monk* and by Byron's jingle: 'I would give many a sugar-cane, Mat. Lewis were alive again!' Lewis should, however, be one of the leading names in the history of the German influence in England. He was three years younger than Scott; but was already famous. Lewis was the son of a man in the then enviable position of a proprietor of large sugar-plantations; who could, therefore, live in England, buy boroughs, and take part in the game of politics. The son had distinguished himself as a boy actor at Westminster, and in 1791 went to see his mother, a beauty and a musician, who had separated from his father and settled at Paris. In 1792 the lad, then only seventeen, went off to Weimar, attracted by the fame of the great author of Werther. He learned German, and his literary ambition was roused. Mrs. Radcliffe had just begun to work the vein first opened by Horace

Walpole, of 'romances with supernatural machinery' and mysterious feudal castles. Whether Lewis was influenced by her or only by his new German models I will not presume to say. Anyhow, he wrote *The Monk*, which was published in his twentieth year (1795), and became a famous author at a bound. He had the grace to remove certain indecencies of which a respectable public loudly complained, and, though much abused, was accepted as a literary luminary in the eyes of Scott when, a little later, he came to see his aristocratic friends in Scotland. Lewis, indeed, was a quaint contrast to the sturdy borderer. He was diminutive in size, with eyes projecting 'like an insect's,' full of transparent vanity, intolerable loquacity, and, it would seem, not a little of a snob. His father had given him a seat in Parliament; he furnished a cottage in the best taste of the day; he was admitted to fashionable circles, was welcomed by the Duchess of York at Oatlands, and was familiar in later years with Byron and the questionable dandies of the Regency. With all his foibles, Lewis had some excellent qualities. Though he was not an Abolitionist, he felt it to be a duty to look into the position of his slaves for himself; went twice to his estates in the West Indies, and

on the second visit caught the yellow fever, of which he died. He had made a will, witnessed by Byron and Shelley, intending to secure the welfare of his slaves; and the posthumous 'journal' of his voyage is a really interesting book, pronounced to be 'delightful' by Coleridge. Lewis, too, had a great facility for versification, a genuine ear for metre, and some of his ballads (*Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene*, for example) have still a kind of lingering vitality. Lewis was a friend, perhaps a rejected lover, of the lady known for certain questionable memoirs who afterwards became Lady Charlotte Bury. He visited her in Scotland in 1798 and there met Scott, who, though he laughed good-humouredly at the little fop, was ready to receive him as a mentor. Lewis could tell Scott of the great Germans whom he had seen in the flesh. He was collecting ballads for his projected *Tales of Wonder*, and found a promising recruit in the translator of *Lenore*. He criticised Scott's careless grammar and rhymes with a good deal of acuteness, and actually got a publisher to give £25 for the *Götz of Berlichingen*. Possibly, too, it was he who induced Kean to think for a time of producing *The House of Aspen*, which, however, as Scott says, was

finally given up on account of the growing ridicule of the German drama.

Scott, we are told, was himself restrained from German extravaganzas by the good taste of his beloved William Erskine, and Lewis's chief influence seems to have been in encouraging the taste for ballads which resulted in the *Border Minstrelsy* and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.* Lewis's own collection, the *Tales of Wonder*, was a clumsy miscellany, which fell flat when it at first appeared. Meanwhile, he was one of the leaders in introducing the passion for German plays which marked the end of the century. The British public, it must be confessed, did not show a very discriminative taste. Lewis's *Castle Spectre*, founded on an early romance of his own, had a run of sixty nights in 1798, and is said to have made more money than any play for twenty years. It was eclipsed next year by Sheridan's *Pizarro*, adapted from Kotzebue, which when published passed through twenty-nine editions. *The Stranger*, also from Kotzebue, was performed in 1798, and two other translations appeared at the same time. 'Who has e'er been at Drury must needs know *The Stranger*,' according to the authors of *Rejected Addresses*, where an exposition

of the plot may be found. *The Stranger* was long popular, and, as Mr. Herzfeld remarks, was seen by the youthful Pendennis, who may well have been present in person at Drury Lane on 3rd November 1828.[1] In 1798 again Mrs. Inchbald turned Kotzebue's *Natural Son* into *A Lover's Vows*, a play which, as it may be remembered, greatly shocked Miss Fanny Price when a performance was suggested by her cousins at Mansfield Park. Poor old Cumberland, 'Sir Fretful Plagiary,' had to lay hands upon Kotzebue (in his *Joanna of Montfaucon* in 1800), and explains that, although he had always regarded the German drama as a profanation of the English stage, he had 'strong reasons'—of a pecuniary nature, apparently—for bowing to the evil principle. Three out of six volumes of plays from the German plays collected in 1806 are occupied by Kotzebue's works, others of which had been turned to account by Holcroft, a contemporary playwright. The same collection, which shows the contemporary taste, includes a couple of Lessing's plays (*Minna von Bernhelm* and *Emilia Galloti*, which had been acted

[1] From some MSS. of Thackeray recently sold, it appears that he had amused himself by translating something of Kotzebue's when at Weimar.

in 1794), Schiller's *Robbers*, and Goethe's *Stella*.[1] Holcroft had been prevented by the wisdom of the authorities from producing *The Robbers*, though in 1799 J. G. Holman was allowed to give a properly corrected version as *The Redcross Knights*. *Stella* it seems, though translated in 1798, was never performed. Its fame, however, is known to all English readers through the inimitable *Rovers* of the Anti-Jacobin. The fact suggests a curious oversight of later years. Carlyle afterwards rebuked William Taylor for asserting that the play ends by an agreement of the two ladies to live with one husband. This, says Carlyle, is only true of the French version. In point of fact, it was also true of Goethe's first redaction. If Carlyle had forgotten this, he might surely have remembered *The Lovers*, where it is explicitly quoted as the precedent for the catastrophe.

Whether the wit of Canning and his friends gave a death-blow to the 'German Drama'—the drama, that is, of which Kotzebue was the main representative—must be uncertain. The fashion was bound to vanish, one might think, as soon as

[1] Holcroft also published a series of translations of German, Italian, French, and Spanish plays, chiefly by his daughter Fanny, in *The Theatrical Recorder*, 1805-6.

anybody set the example of laughing. It did not, indeed, expire at once. Lewis produced a few more 'romances' from the German in the next few years, and wound up with the melodrama *Timour the Tartar*, produced in 1811 at Covent Garden, to rival Colman's popular *Bluebeard*, and permit the introduction of horses upon the stage. Coleridge's wrath was roused a little later by Maturin's *Bertram*, which had been preferred to his own *Zapolya*. In the *Biographia Literaria*, really a plaintive expostulation due to his sufferings from want of due recognition, he was weak enough to fall foul of his rival, and denounces *Bertram* as an incarnation of the obnoxious spirit. The 'German' drama, he explains, is not really German at all. It was a bastard product of English sentimentalism. The Germans had been reading Young's *Night Thoughts* and Hervey's *Meditations*, and *Clarissa Harlowe*. They adapted the sickly sentimentalism, fostered by these writers, to the machinery of ruined castles and trap-doors, and skeletons and dungeons, first turned to account in the *Castle of Otranto*. The unhallowed brew which resulted should properly be called the Jacobinical drama, and its absurdities are illustrated by a sharp attack upon Maturin's drama. To most

people, Coleridge seemed to be repudiating a heresy in which he was really a partaker. His *Osorio* (which Sheridan refused in 1797, and which succeeded as *Remorse* in 1813), if not of the Kotzebue variety, showed, at least, the influence of *The Robbers* and *The Ghostseers*. The famous translation of *Wallenstein*, the first product of his visit to Germany, would, indeed, have done something, had it not remained in the Longmans' warehouse, to call attention to the higher German drama. But, if one may judge from the translations, little was really done to introduce Schiller's or Goethe's best work to English readers till Carlyle took up the duty more than twenty years afterwards.

Meanwhile, however, one worthy person, Mr. Herzfeld's hero, William Taylor, was diligently hammering some knowledge of German into English brains. Taylor was born at Norwich in 1765. Norwich was still at his birth one of the leading manufacturing towns; and, like some of its rivals, it had a small literary circle which, if not superior to what might now be found there, was more independent of London influences. Philosophical societies were springing up in many prominent towns, such as Liverpool, Manchester,

Newcastle, Birmingham, and Bristol, and such names as Roscoe, Erasmus Darwin, Dalton, Priestley, Wedgwood, Watt, Beddoes, and Davy show that they included some real leaders in science and literature. Norwich, we are told, was called in a contemporary magazine the 'English Athens,' probably to distinguish it from a city similarly named in Scotland. A once famous Unitarian divine, John Taylor, of Norwich, left descendants of literary taste, of whom Sarah, married to John Austin, became afterwards known as a translator of German. There, too, lived the Aldersons, one of whom became Mrs. Opie, and the Martineau family, whose most honoured descendant is still among us, and the Quaker Gurneys, including the future Mrs. Fry. The great Dr. Parr was schoolmaster there for a time, and so was William Enfield, who translated (from the Latin) Brucker's great *History of Philosophy*. Norwich had, moreover, the unique distinction of a home-bred School of Art, of which 'Old Crome' was the most distinguished member. Mackintosh looked in occasionally upon circuit, with Basil Montagu. Another visitor was Crabb Robinson. He went to Germany partly at Taylor's suggestion, visited Weimar, crammed Mme. de Stael, it is said, in

German philosophy, and, as his diary shows, was afterwards a zealous adherent of the Coleridge circles, and eager to promote the spread of the true faith. Altogether, Norwich could hold up its head in the world of letters, and had some outlook towards Germany. Miss Martineau informs us that the society there was priggish, which is not surprising; and Taylor's first biographer gives a quaint reason. The Norwich manufacturer, he says, received more flattery than he could give out. His clerks bowed to the earth before him, whereas he had only to pay compliments when signing formal letters of business to correspondents. He was thus tempted to give himself the airs of a merchant prince in some mediæval city. William Taylor, in his boyhood, was sent by his father, one of these proud manufacturers, to learn languages abroad, and, after acquiring French and Italian, went, in 1781, to Germany. In 1782 he was provided with an introduction to Goethe, though it is doubtful whether he actually saw the great man. After his return, Taylor settled down at Norwich for life. His father retired from business with a fortune, afterwards lost, and Taylor took a leading position as a literary light in his native

city. There he remained, with few interruptions, till his death in 1836. He never married, and was a most devoted son to his parents. He laboured conscientiously at literary pursuits until his health broke down when he was about fifty. His first biographer intimates that he did not refrain as much as was desirable from drinks for which his head was no longer sufficiently strong. One little glimpse of him, apparently about 1820, is given in *Lavengro* (see chap. xxiii.). Taylor is presented to us smoking steadily, calmly expounding heterodox doctrines about Shakespeare and the Bible, confessing, poor man, that his life had been a failure, and recommending his young friend to study German. He seems to have given real encouragement to Borrow's philological tastes. Taylor's first success was the translation of *Lenore*. Soon afterwards he translated Lessing's *Nathan* and Goethe's *Iphigenia;* but his main work was contained in contributions to the old *Monthly Review*—still edited when he began by the Griffiths who had been Goldsmith's taskmaster—and to other reviews, *The Critical*, *The Annual*, and so forth, which have long since retired to the dustiest shelves of old libraries. According to Hazlitt, as Mr. Herzfeld reminds us, Taylor set the example

of the fuller reviews,[1] which in *The Edinburgh* supplanted the old meagre analysis of books. The claim would, I think, require modification. More than thirty years before his predecessor, Goldsmith had contributed genuine reviews to the same periodical—to give no other instances. At any rate, Taylor never took part in *The Edinburgh* or its rivals. He wrote, we are told, 1750 articles upon a vast variety of topics, many of them upon his speciality of German literature. Out of these he constructed what he called his *Historic Survey of German Poetry* in 1830; and thereby exposed himself to Carlyle's criticism in *The Edinburgh*. The review, as Mr. Herzfeld argues, was in many ways unjust. Unfortunately, it is probably the only thing by which Taylor is faintly remembered. His *Life*, however, has some interest, chiefly from the long correspondence with Southey, who had made his acquaintance on a visit to Norwich in 1798, and, in spite of growing divergence of opinion, kept up the friendship till the last.

Mr. Herzfeld generously seeks to vindicate his hero from Carlyle's criticisms. In one respect he

[1] When did the old form 'reviewals' go out? It is generally used by Southey and his contemporaries.

clearly makes out his case. Carlyle finds thirteen errors in six pages and computes the number in the whole upon that basis. Now these errors, that about *Stella*, for example, are partly Carlyle's own; and if his attention was ever called to the facts, which I should take to be very doubtful, he should, of course, have omitted, or greatly altered, the passage before republishing the essay. So much must be said in bare justice to Taylor; but I cannot think that any one who tries to read the book will doubt that Carlyle's judgment was substantially indisputable. He speaks, indeed, of Taylor's general abilities more respectfully than might have been expected; he admits the value of some of his criticisms and the excellence of his poetical translation; and the criticism, severe enough, is summed up in the phrase, not familiar in English till Mathew Arnold gave it currency, that Taylor was what Germans called a *Philister*—'every fibre of him is Philistine.' That appears to me to be true, though it might have been rather taken for granted than insisted upon. Taylor might have replied as the cats'-meat man, according to Sam Weller, replied to the statement that he was no gentleman—that is a 'self-evident proposition.' I only notice it as illustrating the

change of sentiment. Carlyle, we know, looked up to Goethe as the great prophet of the time. It is a puzzle, not here to be considered, how Carlyle came to be so profoundly impressed by a man so diametrically opposed to him in many ways; and it may be inquired whether Carlyle's Goethe was not something quite different from the Goethe of other people, and, indeed, of historical fact. Anyhow, to Carlyle, and to his English contemporaries, German poetry, as well as German philosophy and historical criticism, had come as a revelation. It meant that a new light had dawned upon the world: that an escape was opened from that wicked old eighteenth century, with its scepticism and its materialism, and that a real survey must correspond to some appreciation of the great spiritual revolution of the age. Now, Taylor, as Carlyle puts it, had simply 'no theorem of Germany and its intellectual progress, not even a false one.' That is precisely the case. When, for example, Taylor compares Goethe, Schiller, and Kotzebue, and shows, in the proper formula of critical balancing, how one is remarkable for 'invention,' and the second for 'pathos,' and the third for 'truth to nature,' he has obviously no glimmering of the relative proportions of

intellectual eminences. You cannot properly 'compare' Scott and Coleridge and 'Monk' Lewis. Perhaps it is equally absurd to compare Taylor himself with critics of a more philosophical kind.

Taylor's work, in fact, represents the state of mind possible to intelligent persons at Norwich at the end of the last century, and from that point of view is highly creditable. The manufacturing circles were inclined to be good sound Whigs in politics, and inclined to Unitarianism in religion. Taylor shared Fox's early enthusiasm for the French Revolution, and held to the good old cause when Southey became a Tory. In religious matters he seems to have deserted Priestley for Erasmus Darwin, who spoke of Unitarianism as a feather-bed for a dying Christian, and decidedly preferred Voltaire's reformation to Luther's. 'Religion,' however, he admitted, 'if a blemish in the male is surely a grace in the female sex,' and his freethinking, though tolerably obvious, was not of the militant kind. He wished only to be allowed to put forward his theories, which are apt to be such as might have pleased Mr. Casaubon in *Middlemarch*. He identified Sesostris with Joshua, and Thales with Homer, and even Jesus the son of Sirach with the

Founder of the Christian religion. He took the Phœnix to be a myth under which the Egyptian priests had couched a theory of comets; and, in short, adopted fancies which might be admired in provincial circles, but would hardly have excited respect in a German University. His English, when he wished to be impressive, was of the fine old Johnsonian variety. Wieland, he says, 'conceals beneath the enthusiasm of a Wesley the scepticism of a Hume. He binds his brow, indeed, with the clusters of Engedi, strews along his path the roses of Sharon, and culls the sweetest lilies of the valley of Tirzah; but he employs them rather as the gift of human than of angelic hands, rather as the luxuries of taste than of faith. With him, Magdalene, Salome, and the younger Maria rather resemble the clad Graces pursuing Apollo in the dance, and scattering perfumes in his way, or the Gopia listening with mingled love and devotion to the hymnings of Krishna, while Cama strains his cany bow and mixes for the nuptial feast his cup of five-fold joy, than'—in short, the Christian saints. It is not surprising that a gentleman who supposes that he must twist language into contortions of this kind in order to be eloquent, should be also very dry when he

has got off the high horse. But it is to be admitted that, in spite of the queer pedantry and the grotesque theories which could flourish in the atmosphere of an old-fashioned country town, there was really a good deal of solid sense, and, what is, perhaps, more unexpected, a capacity for turning out very decent verse translation. Even Carlyle admits that his accounts of Klopstock and Wieland are excellent; and, if the book be taken as contemporary annals instead of philosophic history, it might have passed muster very creditably. Taylor had, at any rate, the merit of studying German industriously for many years under great disadvantages; with little access to books or communication with living representatives of the literature. He had inevitably lost touch of the literary movement, earlier phases of which he describes in rather wooden fashion. His articles, though he never got much recognition as a public teacher, probably did something to spread a certain knowledge of the facts. They were not put together as a book till his powers were declining, and then naturally made a very discontinuous and unequal performance, besides representing an obsolete point of view.

By the time of this publication, indeed, it was

generally understood that there was such a thing as German literature, and that an enlightened person should admire its great names. Coleridge had been talking about the reason and the understanding and object and subject from Highgate Hill for some thirteen years. Byron, though he knew no German, got Monk Lewis to read *Faust* to him, and had dedicated *Sardanapalus* (1821) to Goethe as the 'homage of a literary vassal to his liege lord.' Shelley had translated the prologue of *Faust*. Hare and Thirlwall were translating Niehbuhr. Pusey and H. J. Rose were arguing about the causes of the terrible phenomenon, German 'Neologism.' Sir W. Hamilton had gone to Germany, and had been impressed by metaphysical speculations utterly unknown to Stewart and Brown. Carlyle had been long translating and discoursing so far to very deaf ears. But these and later developments are beyond me. The history of the early explorers is, I think, curious, if only as illustrating the difficulty of persuading the Englishman to recognise the existence of anything beyond his insular world, and perhaps the later history would show how difficult it is afterwards to induce him to turn his knowledge to any account.

MATTHEW ARNOLD[1]

WHEN your Principal asked me to select a topic for a lecture, I replied, in a moment of weakness, that I would speak of Matthew Arnold. The choice was partly suggested by an observation made on a recent visit to the United States. It struck me that Arnold's merits were even more fully recognised there than in his own country; though I hope that here, too, they do not lack appreciation. American opinion is probably not infallible. Still, fame on the other side of the Atlantic establishes a certain presumption of excellence. It proves that a man's influence was not created by, and may sometimes indicate that it has been partly obscured by, our local prejudices. At any rate, the observation suggested some thoughts, which, it occurred to me, might be worth submitting to an English audience.

[1] A lecture delivered at the Owens College, Manchester, 13th November 1893.

Well, I have been ever since repenting my decision. The reasons against my enterprise are indeed so strong that I am now almost afraid to mention them. In the first place, I knew Arnold personally, though I cannot boast of having known him so intimately as to be provided with reminiscences. At one of my meetings with him, indeed, I do remember a remark which was made, and which struck me at the moment as singularly happy. Unfortunately, it was a remark made by me and not by him. Nothing, therefore, should induce me to report it, although, if you attend to what I am about to say, you will perhaps hear it, and, I hope, recognise it by this description. But, though our acquaintance was not so close as I could have wished, it left me with a singularly strong impression of Arnold's personal charm. Though some objects of my worship were to him mere wooden idols; though I once satisfactorily confuted him in an article, now happily forgotten by myself and everybody else; though I was once even his Editor, and forced in that capacity to decline certain articles, on grounds, of course, quite apart from literary merit; yet he was always not only courteous but cordial, and, I

may almost say, affectionate in manner. He had that obvious sweetness of nature, which it is impossible not to recognise and not to love. Though in controversy he took and gave many shrewd blows, he always received them with a courtesy, indicative not of mere policy or literary tact, but of dislike to inflicting pain and of incapacity for hating any tolerably decent antagonist in flesh and blood. He was on excellent terms with the classes whose foibles he ridiculed most unsparingly, and even his own foibles were attractive. He had his vanity; but vanity is a quality to which moralists have never done justice. As distinguished from conceit, from a sullen conviction of your own superiority, it often implies a craving for sympathy and a confidence in the sincerity of your fellows, which is in the main, as his certainly was, an amiable and attractive characteristic. If it just savoured of intellectual coxcombry, it was redeemed by a simplicity and social amenity which showed that his nature had resisted the ossifying process which makes most of us commonplace and prosaic in later life. Now, I dislike criticism of men whose personal acquaintance I have valued. 'I love Robertson,' said Johnson, 'and I won't talk of his books.'

I feel the same, in a rather different sense, about Arnold. It is difficult to reconcile the claims of honest criticism and personal esteem. But, besides this, I have a difficulty to which I must refer at the risk of giving an impression of mock-modesty. I feel, that is, the great difficulty of speaking to purpose of a man whose intellectual type was so different from my own. Had Arnold been called upon to pronounce judgment upon me, he must, however reluctantly, have set me down as a Philistine. It is a word which I dislike; but I cannot deny that, in his phraseology, it would be indisputably appropriate. Arnold was a typical Oxford man in the days when Oxford was stirred by the 'movement' of which it is supposed to be proper to speak respectfully. I was taught in my childhood to regard 'Puseyism' and 'Tractarianism' with a vague shuddering horror; and, as I grew older, I am afraid that the horror only became milder as it was mixed with something too like contempt. The young leader whose opinions I assimilated in college days belonged to a different and more prosaic school. They scorned sentimentalism and æsthetic revivals, and, if they took any interest in speculative matters, read John Stuart

Mill, and were sound Utilitarians and orthodox Political Economists. A hard-headed senior wrangler is in his own conceit a superior being to a flighty double first-class man. But perhaps his solid conviction that he was in the right path made him rather unfitted to judge of the sister University. He thought her impulsive, ill-balanced, too easily hurried into the pursuit of all kinds of theological, philosophical, and literary chimeras; and therefore was unjust to her substantial merits and even to the intellectual impulse which, with all its vagaries, was yet better than stagnation. After all, I am probably only trying to hint at the fundamental difference between the poetic and the prosaic mind. We—for I may perhaps assume that some of you belong, like me, to the prosaic faction—feel, when dealing with such a man as Arnold, at a loss. He has intuitions where we have only calculations; he can strike out vivid pictures where we try laboriously to construct diagrams; he shows at once a type where our rough statistical and analytical tables fail to reveal more than a few tangible facts; he perceives the spirit and finer essence of an idea where it seems to slip through our coarser fingers, leaving only a

residuum of sophistical paradox. In the long-run, the prosaic weigher and measurer has one advantage: he is generally in the right as far as he goes. His tests may be coarser, but they are more decisive and less dependent upon his own fancies; but, when he tries to understand his rival, to explain how at a bound the intuitive perception has reached conclusions after which he can only hobble on limping feet, he is apt to make a bungle of it: to despise the power in which he is so deficient: and probably to suggest unreasonable doubts as to its reality and value.

Here is, I feel, my real weakness in speaking of Arnold; for I may certainly say at once that Arnold, whatever else he was, was a genuine poet. I do not dispute the general opinion of the day that there were only two poets of the first rank in his generation. Arnold must, on the whole, take a lower place than Tennyson and Browning. But, though I cannot avoid falling into the method of comparison, I do not accept with satisfaction the apparently implied doctrine that poets can be satisfactorily arranged in order of merit. We cannot give so many marks for style and so many for pathos or descriptive power. It is best to look at each poet by himself. We

need only distinguish between the sham and the genuine article; and my own method of distinguishing is a simple one. I believe in poetry which learns itself by heart. There are poems which dominate and haunt one; which, once admitted, sting and cling to one; the tune of which comes up and runs in one's head at odd moments; and which suddenly revive, after years of forgetfulness, as vigorous and lively as ever. Such poetry, as Wordsworth told Arnold, has the characteristic of being 'inevitable,'—a phrase which has become something of a nuisance, but cannot be always avoided. You feel that the thing had to be said just as it was said; and that, once so said, nothing said by anybody else will just hit the same mark. Of course, this test, being personal, is not conclusive. I remember, I am ashamed to say it, some poetry which I know to be trash, merely, I suppose, because it jingles pleasantly; and I forget a great deal which I know to be good because I can perceive that it dominates other people; but then I do my best to keep my tastes on such occasions to myself. Now, Matthew Arnold's poetry has, in an eminent degree, the quality—if not of inevitableness—of adhesiveness. I don't know

whether my experience is peculiar; but I have never got out of my head, since I read it, the little poem about the Neckan, who sings his plaintive song on the Baltic headlands, or the charming verses—the last, I fancy, which he wrote—about the dachshund Geist, whose grave at Cobham should be a goal for all poetic pilgrims. In certain of his more laboured poems, I am conscious rather that I ought to admire than that I do admire. To my brutal mind, the recollection of the classical models is a source of annoyance, as suggesting that the scholar is in danger of suppressing the man. But there are other poems which I love, if not because of, at any rate in spite of, the classical propensities which they reveal. 'Sohrab and Rustum' is to me among the most delightful of modern poems, though in it Arnold indulges, perhaps more than enough, in the long-tailed Homeric metaphor, which drags in upon principle all the points on which the thing compared does not resemble the object. I can always read 'Tristram and Iseult,' and the 'Church of Brou' and 'Empedocles on Etna'; and know that they leave behind them a sense of sweetness and delicacy and exquisite feeling, if they do not

present those vivid phrases into which the very greatest men—the Dantes or Shakespeares—can infuse their very life-blood. In his *Essays upon Celtic Literature*—perhaps the most delightful of his books—Arnold says that English poetry derived three things mainly from Celtic sources: its turn for style, its turn for melancholy, and its turn for natural magic. The distinction is indicated with admirable fineness; and my perceptions are not quite fine enough to follow it. Keats, Arnold is able to perceive, is looking at nature like a Greek when he asks

> What little town by river or seashore
> Or mountain built with quiet citadel
> Is emptied of its folk this pious morn?

but becomes Celtic when he speaks of

> Magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in fairy-land forlorn!

Possibly: but I am shy of endeavouring to discriminate these exquisite essences, and I will not attempt to say whether it is the power of style or of magic, whether it is the presence of a Greek or a Celtic mode of looking at nature, that charms us in what is perhaps Arnold's masterpiece, the 'Scholar Gipsy.' Whether the exquisite concluding stanzas, for example, be an instance

of the Greek or of the Celtic element, I know not; but I am quite sure that they are delightful. At his best Arnold reaches a felicity of style in which Tennyson alone, of all our modern poets, if Tennyson himself, was his superior. The comparison, much as I dislike comparisons, may suggest at least the question why Arnold's popularity is still, as I think it is, below his deserts. One answer is obvious. I cannot doubt that Arnold fully appreciated the greatest of contemporary artists. But certain references to Tennyson in his essays are significant. Arnold incidentally quotes Tennyson's 'great, broad-shouldered, genial Englishman,' by way of illustrating his favourite proposition that this broad-shouldered personage was a 'barbarian,' and conspicuous for insensibility to ideas. He refers with a certain scorn to the self-complacency implied in the phrase about freedom broadening slowly down from precedent to precedent. Though Arnold does not criticise the poetry, he evidently felt—what, to say the truth, I think must be admitted—that Tennyson interpreted the average—shall I say, the Philistine or the commonplace English sentiment?—a little too faithfully; but it may be inferred—though Arnold does not draw the

inference—that the extraordinary popularity of Tennyson was partly owing to the fact that he could express what occurred to everybody in language that could be approached by nobody. Arnold, on the contrary, is, in all his poems, writing for the cultivated, and even for a small class of cultivated people. The ideas which he expresses are not only such as do not commend themselves, but sometimes such as are rather annoying, to the average reader. The sentiments peculiar to a narrow, however refined, class are obviously so far less favourable to poetical treatment. Arnold seems to admit this in his occasional employment of that rhymeless metre which corresponds to the borderland between prose and poetry. A characteristic piece is that upon 'Heine's Grave.' We all remember the description of England, the 'Weary Titan,' who with deaf

> Ears, and labour-dimmed eyes,
> Regarding neither to right
> Nor left, goes passively by,
> Staggering on to her goal, etc.

and a phrase which tells us how the spirit of the world, beholding men's absurdity, let a sardonic smile

For one short moment wander o'er his lips—
That smile was Heine.

That, of course, is rather epigram than poetry. It matters, indeed, very little whether we call it by one name or another, so long as we allow it to be effective. But writing of this kind, call it poetry or prose, or a hybrid genus, in which the critic shows through the poet, is not likely to suit the popular mind. It presupposes a whole set of reflections which are the property of a special class. And the same may be said of the particular mood which is specially characteristic of Arnold. In the 'Scholar Gipsy' he laments 'the strange disease of modern life,'

With its sick hurry, its divided aims;

speaks of us 'light half-believers of our casual creeds'; tells how the wisest of us takes dejectedly 'his seat upon the intellectual throne,' and lays bare his sad experience of wretched days, and 'all his hourly varied anodynes'; while we, who are not the wisest, can only pine, wish that the long, unhappy dream would end, and keep as our only friend 'sad patience, too near neighbour to despair.' This note jars upon some people, who prefer, perhaps, the mild resignation of the 'Christian Year.' I fail of

sympathy for the opposite reason. I cannot affect to share Arnold's discomfort. I have never been able—doubtless it is a defect—to sympathise with the Obermanns and Amiels whom Arnold admired; excellent but surely effeminate persons, who taste of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and finding the taste bitter, go on making wry faces over it all their lives; and, admitting with one party that the old creeds are doomed, assert with the other that all beauty must die with them. The universe is open to a great many criticisms; there is plenty of cause for tears and for melancholy; and great poets in all ages have, because they were great poets, given utterance to the sorrows of their race. But I don't feel disposed to grumble at the abundance of interesting topics or the advance of scientific knowledge, because some inconveniences result from both. I say all this simply as explaining why the vulgar—including myself—fail to appreciate these musical moans over spilt milk, which represent rather a particular eddy in an intellectual revolution than the deeper and more permanent emotions of human nature. But I do not mean to depreciate Arnold's power; only to suggest reasons for the want of a wider recogni-

tion. The 'Scholar Gipsy,' for example, expresses in certain passages sentiment which I must call morbid, but for all that, even for me, it remains one of the most exquisite poems in the language.

This leads me to another point. In his essay upon Joubert (*Essays in Criticism*, p. 249), Arnold spoke of literature as a 'criticism of life.' Elsewhere (Introduction to Mr. H. Ward's *Collection of Poems*) he gave the same account of poetry. But to poetry, he says in the same breath, we shall have to turn for consolation, and it will replace much of 'what now passes with us for religion and philosophy.' If so, he obviously cannot mean that poetry and criticism are really the same thing. The phrase 'criticism of life' gave great offence, and was much ridiculed by some writers, who were apparently unable to distinguish between an epigram and a philosophical dogma. To them, indeed, Arnold's whole position was naturally abhorrent. For it is not uncommon now to hear denunciations of all attempts to connect art with morality and philosophy. It is wicked, we are told, for a poet, or a novelist, or a painter, to take any moral consideration into account; and therefore to talk of poetry as destined to do for us much

that philosophy and religion used to do is, of course, manifestly absurd. I will not argue the point at length, being content to observe that the cry seems to me oddly superfluous. Of all the dangers to which modern novelists, for example, are exposed, that against which they are least required to guard is the danger of being too philosophical. They really may feel at their ease; nor do I think that they need feel much alarmed as to the risk of being too moral. Meanwhile, it is my belief that nobody is the better in any department of life or literature for being a fool or a brute: and least of all in poetry. I cannot think that a man is disqualified for poetry either by thinking more deeply than others or by having a keener perception of (I hope I may join the two words) moral beauty. A perception of what it is that makes a hero or saint is, I fancy, as necessary to a great literary artist as a perception of what it is that constitutes physical beauty to a painter. The whole doctrine, in short, seems to me to be a misstatement of the very undeniable and very ancient truth that it is a poet's business to present types, for example, and not to give bare psychological theory: not that he is the worse for being even a deep philosopher or a subtle logi-

cian; on the contrary, he is so far the better; but that he is the worse if he gives the abstract reasoning instead of incarnating his thought in concrete imagery. And so, when Arnold called poetry a criticism of life, he only meant to express what seems to me to be an undeniable truth. The Elgin marbles might, in his sense, be called a criticism of the physique of the sight-seers. To contrast their perfect forms and unapproachable grace with the knock-kneed, spindle-shanked, narrow-chested, round-shouldered product of London slums who passes before them, is to criticise the poor creature's defects of structure in the most effective way. In a similar sense, when a poet or a novelist presents us with a type, when Addison gives us a Roger de Coverley, or Goldsmith a Vicar of Wakefield, or Scott a Dandie Dinmont, or Thackeray a Colonel Newcome, or Dickens a Mr. Creakle (I chose this example of Dickens only because Arnold made use of it himself), they present us with ideal portraits which set off—more effectively than any deliberate analysis — the actual human beings known to us, who more or less represent similar classes. In his essay upon the 'Function of Criticism,' Arnold explained his lofty conception

of the art, and showed why, in his sense of the word, it should be the main aim of all modern literature. 'Criticism,' he said, 'is the disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known or thought in the world.' The difference between poetry and criticism is that one gives us the ideal and the other explains to us how it differs from the real. What is latent in the poet is made explicit in the critic. Arnold, himself, even when he turned to criticism, was primarily a poet. His judgments show greater skill in seizing characteristic aspects than in giving a logical analysis or a convincing proof. He goes by intuition, not by roundabout logical approaches. No recent English critic, I think, has approached him in the art of giving delicate portraits of literary leaders; he has spoken, for example, precisely the right word about Byron and Wordsworth. Many of us, who cannot rival him, may gain from Arnold's writings a higher conception of what will be our true function if we could discharge it. He did, I think, more than any man to impress upon his countrymen that the critic should not be a mere combatant in a series of faction fights, puffing friends, and saying to an enemy, 'This will never do.' The weak side, however,

of the poetical criticism is its tendency to be 'subjective,' that is, to reflect too strongly the personal prejudices of the author. It must virtually consist in giving the impression made upon the critic; and, however delicate his perception and wide his sympathy, he will be scarcely human if his judgments are not affected by his personal equation. No one could be more alive to the danger than Arnold, and his most characteristic teaching turns upon the mode of avoiding it. There are times, no doubt, when he relies too confidently upon the fineness of his perception, and then obviously has a slight spasm of diffidence. I have noticed how, in his *Essays on Celtic Literature*, he uses the true poetical or intuitive method: he recognises the precise point at which Shakespeare or Keats passes from the Greek to the Celtic note; he trusts to the fineness of his ear, like a musician who can detect the slightest discord. And we feel perhaps that a man who can decide, for example, an ethnological question by such means, who can by simple inspiration determine which are the Celtic and which are the Teutonic and which are the Norman elements in English character, is going a little beyond his tether. Arnold obviously feels so

too. In the same book he speaks most respectfully of the opposite or prosaic method. Zeuss, the great Celtic scholar, is praised because he uses a scientific test to determine the age of documents. This test is that in Welsh and Irish the letters *p* and *t* gradually changed into *b* or *d* (as if the Celts had caught a cold in their head); that *map* became *mab*, and *coet*, *coed*. This, says Arnold, is a verifiable and scientific test. When Arnold is himself trying to distinguish the Celtic element in Englishmen, he starts by remarking that a Frenchman would speak of German *bêtise*, but of English *gaucherie*: the German is *balourd*, and the Englishman *empêtré*; and the German *niais*, while the Englishman is *mélancolique*. We can hardly say that the difference of meaning between *balourd* and *empêtré* is as clear as the difference of sound between t and d: and Arnold is, perhaps, too much inclined to trust to his intuitions, as if they were equivalent to scientific and measurable statements. The same tendency shows itself in his curious delight in discovering catch-words, and repeating them sometimes to weariness. He uses such phrases as 'sweetness and light' with a certain air of laying down a genuine scientific distinc-

tion, as clear-cut and unequivocal as a chemist's analysis. He feels that he has thoroughly analysed English characteristics when he has classified his countrymen as 'Philistines, Barbarians, and the Populace.' To fix a certain aspect of things by an appropriate phrase is the process which corresponded with him to a scientific analysis. But may not this method merely lead to the substitution of one set of prejudices for another; the prejudices, say, of the fastidious don for the prejudices of the coarser tradesman? The Frenchman who calls the Englishman *empêtré* may be as narrow-minded as the Englishman who calls the Frenchman a frog-eater. Certainly, Arnold would reply. What we need is to make a stream of fresh thought play freely about our stock 'notions and habits.'[1] We have to get out of an unfruitful and mechanical routine. Or, as he puts it in another way, his one qualification for teaching his countrymen is, he says, his belief in the 'primary needfulness of seeing things as they really are, and of the greater importance of ideas than of the machinery which exists for them.'[2] That is, we want, above all things, to get rid of

[1] *Culture and Anarchy* (1893), p. 121.
[2] *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), p. 70.

prejudices in general, not of any special prejudice; to have our opinions constructed out of pure, impartial, unbiassed thought, free from all baser alloy of mephitic vapours. The mere self-willed assertion of our own fancies can never lift us to the higher point of view which would reveal our narrowness and ignorance. Hence the vast importance of 'culture': the one thing needful; which, again, in another view, is equivalent to a frank submission of ourselves to the Zeitgeist. The Zeitgeist, indeed, is an entity not quite easy to define. But it at least supposes that genuine philosophy and scientific thought is a reality; that there is a real difference between the scholar and the charlatan; that criticism in a wide sense has achieved some permanent and definite results; and that, although many antiquated prejudices still survive and dominate us, especially in England, and constitute the whole mental furniture of the Philistine, they are doomed to decay, and those who hold by them doomed to perish with them. To recognise, therefore, the deep, underlying currents of thought, to get outside of the narrow limits of the popular prejudice, to steep our minds in the best thought of the past, and to be open to the really great thoughts of the

present, is the one salvation for the race and for reasonable men. The English people, he often said,[1] had entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon their spirit for two centuries. To give them the key and to exhort them to use it was his great aim. Heine had called himself a 'brave soldier in the war of the liberation of humanity,' and Arnold took service in the same army. Only—and this was the doctrine upon which he laid emphasis—to fight effectually we must recognise the true leaders, those who really spoke with authority, and who were the true advanced guard in the march to the land of promise. Your individualist would only take off the fetters so as to allow a free fight among the prisoners. The prophet of culture alone can enable us to get free from the prison-house itself. His strong sense of the mischief of literary anarchy appeared in his once famous essay upon the French Academy. Though he guarded himself against recommending an English institution, he was fascinated by the charm of an acknowledged tribunal of good taste, an outward and visible symbol of right reason, of a body which, by its moral authority, should

[1] *Essays on Criticism*, p. 70.

restrain men from those excesses and faults of taste into which even the greatest Englishmen are apt to fall, and which should keep distinctly before our minds the conviction that we only obtain worthy intellectual liberty when we recognise the necessity of subordination to the highest minds. To imbibe the teaching of the Zeitgeist, to know what is the true living thought of the age and who are its great men, is to accept a higher rule, and not merely (as he put it) to exchange the errors of Miall for the errors of Mill: to become a vulgar Freethinker instead of a vulgar Dissenter.

The doctrine of culture is, of course, in some sense the common property of all cultivated men. Carlyle, like Arnold, wished for an exit from Houndsditch and a relinquishment of Hebrew old clothes. But Arnold detested Carlyle's Puritanism, and was alienated by his sulphurous and volcanic explosiveness. Mill hated the tyranny of the majority, and, of course, rejected the Puritan theology. But Mill was a Benthamite, and Benthamism was the natural doctrine of the Philistine. Mill's theories would lead, though in spite of himself, to that consummation which Arnold most dreaded—the general dominion of the Commonplace: to the definitive imposition

upon the world of the code of the Philistine. To define Arnold's point of view, we should have, I think, to consider what in our modern slang is called his environment. Any one who reads the life of his father will see how profound was the influence upon the son. 'Somewhere, surely, afar,' as he says in the lines in Rugby Chapel,

> In the sounding labour-house vast
> Of being, is practised that strength,
> Zealous, beneficent, firm.

Some of the force, may one say, had passed into the younger man, though he had lost something of the austere strength, and had gained much in delicacy, and certainly in a sense of humour curiously absent in the elder, as it is, I think, in most good men. Dr. Arnold shared the forebodings common at the period of the Reform Bill. The old dogged Conservatism of the George III. and Eldon type was doomed. But who was to profit by the victory? The Radicals, led by Bentham and James Mill? That meant confiscation and disestablishment in practice; and in theory, materialism or atheism. This was the 'liberalism' denounced and dreaded by Newman.[1] But then, to Dr. Arnold, the Oxford Movement

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 23.

itself meant a revival of superstition and sacerdotalism. He held that there was a truer liberalism than Benthamism, a liberalism of which Coleridge expounded and suggested the philosophy: a doctrine which could reanimate the old creeds by exposing them to the light, and bring them into harmony with the best modern thought. The Church, neither plundered nor enslaved by superstition, might be lifted to a higher intellectual level, and become once more the great national organ of spiritual influence and development. Matthew Arnold always held to this aspiration. He hoped that the Church might open its doors to all dissenters—not only to Protestants, but even in course of time to Roman Catholics.[1] He hated disestablishment, and even in the case of the Church of Ireland, condemned a measure which, though it removed an injustice, removed it at the cost of an alliance with the narrow dissenting prejudices. But the views of the young man were also modified by the fascination of the Newman school. Of Oxford he could never speak without enthusiasm, if he could not quite refrain from a touch of irony. 'Adorable dreamer!' he exclaims,[2] 'whose heart has been so romantic! who has given thyself prodigally,

[1] *St. Paul and Protestantism.* [2] *Essays on Criticism,* p. xvii.

given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only not to the Philistines! Home of lost causes and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names and impossible loyalties!' Oxford, as he says elsewhere,[1] had taught the truth that 'beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection.' Bad philosophies, another critic (I think Professor Flint) has said, when they die, go to Oxford. Arnold admitted the badness of the philosophies, but the beauty and sweetness, he would have added, are immortal. The effect, therefore, upon him was not to diminish his loyalty to philosophy; no one more hated all obscurantism: his belief in 'culture,' in the great achievements of scholarship, of science, of historical criticism, was part of his nature. He was not the man to propose to put back the hand of the dial, or to repel the intellectual ocean with the mop of an orthodox Mrs. Partington. But his keen appreciation of the beauty of the old ideals governed his thought. He even held[2] that the Christianity of the future would be Catholicism, though Catholicism 'purged' and 'opening itself to the light,' 'conscious of its own poetry, freed from its sacerdotal despotism, and

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 23. [2] *Mixed Essays*, p. 121.

freed from its pseudo-scientific apparatus of superannuated dogma.' Meanwhile, his classical training and his delight in the clearness and symmetry of the great French writers affected his taste. He has told us how his youthful enthusiasm took him at one time to Paris, to spend two months in seeing Rachel's performances[1] on the French stage, and at another, to visit George Sand in her country retirement. And then came the experience of his official career which made him familiar with the educational systems of France and Germany, and with the chaotic set of institutions which represented an educational system in England. The master-thought, he says,[2] by which his politics were governed was the thought of the 'bad civilisation of the English middle-class.' This was, in fact, the really serious aim to which his whole literary activity in later life converged. Condemned to live and work among the middle-class, while imbued with the ideas in which they were most defective, loving, as he did, the beauty and freshness of Oxford, the logical clearness and belief in ideas of France, the devotion to scientific truth and philosophical thoroughness in Germany, the

[1] *Irish Essays*, p. 151. [2] *Ibid.* p. 17.

sight of the dogged British Philistine became to him a perpetual grievance. The middle-class, as he said in one of his favourite formulæ,[1] has a 'defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and knowledge, a stinted sense of beauty, and a low type of manners.' Accordingly, the function which he took for himself was to be a thorn in the side of the Philistine: to pierce the animal's thick hide with taunts, delicate but barbed; to invent nicknames which might reveal to the creature his own absurdity; to fasten upon expressions characteristic of the blatant arrogance and complacent ineffable self-conceit of the vulgar John Bull, and repeat them till even Bull might be induced to blush. Somebody's unlucky statement that the English was the best breed in the world; the motto about the 'dissidence of dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion'; the notice of Wragg—the woman who was taken up for child-murder; the assertion of *The Saturday Review* that we were the most logical people in the world; the roarings of the 'young lions of *The Daily Telegraph*,' and their like, which covered our impotence in European wars; the truss-manufactory which ornamented the finest

[1] *Mixed Essays*, p. 167.

site in Europe: upon these and other texts he harped—perhaps with a little too much repetition—in the hope of bringing to us some sense of our defects. I must confess that, as a good Philistine, I often felt, and hope I profited by the feeling, that he had pierced me to the quick, and I submitted to his castigations as I have had to submit to the probings of a dentist—I knew they were for my good. And I often wished, I must also confess, that I too had a little sweetness and light that I might be able to say such nasty things of my enemies. We who were young radicals in the days when Arminius von Thunder-Ten Tronckh was writing to *The Pall Mall Gazette*, tried to retort by calling him a mere dandy, a kid-gloved Oxford coxcomb, who was thinking that revolutions could be made with rosewater. I can see now that we did not do justice to the real seriousness of his purpose. You do not, we said sometimes, propose any practical measure. He replied fairly enough that it was not his business, nor the business of philosophers and poets generally, to mix in actual politics and draft Acts of Parliament. They had to modify ideas. He might have added that in his own sphere, he had made very practical criticisms upon our educational

system; and had, for example, pointed out the defects of English secondary education with a clearness which is only now beginning to have some recognition from practical politicians. But it was no doubt his conviction that his countrymen required less a change of machinery than an intellectual change. What is indispensable, he said,[1] is that we should not only *do* to Ireland something different, but that we should *be* something different. A writer, however great a thinker and artist, who deliberately proposes to change the character of his countrymen, is undoubtedly undertaking a superhuman task. If Philistinism be really part of our character we shall be Philistines to the end, let our Carlyles and Newmans or Mills and Arnolds preach never so wisely and never so frequently. And yet their preaching is not the less useful: more useful, perhaps, than that of the politicians who boast of keeping to the practical and confine their energies to promoting such measures as are likely to catch votes at the next election. 'To see things as they really are': that, he said, was his great aim; and it is clearly a good one. And what is the great obstacle to seeing things as they really are? The great obstacle is,

[1] Preface to *Irish Essays*.

I take it, that we are ourselves part of the things to be seen; and that there is an ancient and proverbial difficulty about seeing ourselves. When certain prejudices have become parts of our mental furniture, when our primary data and our methods of reasoning imply a set of local narrow assumptions, the task of getting outside them is almost the task of getting outside of our own skins. Our pigtails, as the poet observes, persist in hanging behind us in spite of all our circumgyrations. The greatness of a thinker is measured by the width of his intellectual horizon, or by the height to which he can rise above the plane of ordinary thought. Arnold's free play of thought implies the process by which he hoped to achieve liberation for himself. Be yourself cultured, and your eyes will be opened to the ugliness of the Philistines. To be cultured, widen your intellectual horizon, and steep yourself in the best thought of all ages and all civilised men. If Arnold trusted a little too much to the æsthetic perceptions thus generated, he succeeded, I think, in reaching a position from which he both discerned and portrayed most clearly some palpable blots. Such a service is a great one, whatever the accuracy of the judgment. It is good to

breathe a new atmosphere if only for a space. I have more respect than he had for the masculine common-sense of Macaulay—the great apostle, as Arnold called him, of the Philistines—but, after Macaulay's unhesitating utterances of the old Whig creed, which to him was an ultimate and infallible gospel, Arnold's utterances lift us at once to a higher point of view. When one attempts, under Arnold's guidance, to assign to the Whig his proper place in European history, and to see how far he is from fully representing the ultimate verdict of philosophy, whatever our political creed—and mine is very different from Arnold's—he really helps us to cure the mind's eye of the cataract of dogged prejudice, of whose very existence we were unconscious.

His position was, no doubt, one which we may call unpractical. He was a democrat in one sense: for aristocracy was unfavourable to ideas, and the Zeitgeist has condemned the system. Inequality, as he said in a remarkable essay,[1] 'materialises our upper classes, vulgarises our middle classes, brutalises our lower classes.' He speaks as one shocked, not less in his moral than in his æsthetic capacity, by the 'hardly human horror, the abjec-

[1] *Irish Essays*, p. 91.

tion and uncivilisedness' of the populace in Glasgow and the East of London. He held that the French Revolution, by promoting equality, had raised the lower classes of France to a marked superiority in civilisation above the corresponding class in England. Democracy, he admitted, might get too much of its own way in England. The remedy was to be sought in a stronger action of the central power. We have not, he complains, the notion, so familiar on the Continent and to antiquity, of the State; and the English hatred of all authority has tended to make us drift towards mere anarchy.[1] When Fawcett preached self-help, Arnold held that to exhort to self-help in England was to carry coals to Newcastle. It was the parrot-like repetition of old formulæ that made our liberalism barren. Our danger was all the other way, the danger of exaggerating the blessings of self-will and self-assertion.[2] I do not quote Arnold's view to show that he was right, or to claim foresight for his predictions. I doubt, for example, whether any one would say now that we hear too much of self-help, or that there is no danger on the opposite side, or whether Arnold himself would have been attracted by State Socialism

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 36. [2] *Irish Essays*, p. 96.

He was, indeed, deliberately in the habit of giving one side of a question without caring to add even the corrections of which he himself approved. That is natural in a man who wishes to stimulate thought, rather than to preach any definite practical conclusion. I only urge that there was a real and very rare merit in such a position taken by a man of so much insight. The effort to see English life and society and thought, as a German professor or a French politician might see it, to get outside of the prejudices which are part of ourselves, is itself a most useful experience. And when such criticism is carried on with a singular fulness of perception, with pungent flashes of sarcasm, but with a power of speaking truths as undeniable as they are unpleasant, and yet with so much true urbanity—in spite of certain little defects, when he seems to be rather forcing himself to be humorous, and becomes liable to an accusation of flippancy—in such a case, I say that we owe the deepest gratitude to our critic. His criticism is anything but final, but it is to be taken into account by every man who believes in the importance of really civilising the coming world. How the huge, all-devouring monster which we call Democracy is to be dealt with : how he is to

be coaxed or lectured or preached into taking as large a dose as possible of culture, of respect for true science and genuine thought, is really one of the most pressing of problems. Some look on with despair, doubting only by whatever particular process we shall be crushed into a dead level of monotonous mediocrity. I do not suppose that Arnold or any one else could give any solution of the great problems; what he could do, and did, I think, more effectually than any one, was to wake us out of our dull complacency—to help to break through the stolid crust, whatever seeds may be sown by other hands. Perhaps this explains why he is read in America, where the Philistine is a very conspicuous phenomenon and the ugly side of middle-class mediocrity is even more prominent than here.

I have reserved to the last, in order that I may pass lightly, the point which to Arnold himself doubtless appeared to be the most important part of his teaching—I mean, of course, the criticism of religion, to which he devoted his last writings. In his last books, Arnold preached a doctrine which will hardly find many followers. He seemed even to be taking pains to get into a position scarcely intelligible to people who take

things practically. He poses, one may say, as a literary critic; he disavows all logical system, and declares almost ostentatiously that he is no metaphysician; but his apparent conclusion is, not that he is incompetent to speak of philosophy, but that philosophy is mere pedantry, so far as it is not poetry in disguise. The organ by which we are to discover religious truth does not employ the prosaic method of examining evidence, nor the logical method of *à priori* reasoning; but that free play of thought which is our guide in letters: the judgment, as he says, which insensibly forms itself in a fair mind, familiar with the best thoughts of the world. The prophet is inspired by the Zeitgeist, and judges by a cultivated instinct, not by systematic argument. The rather airy mode of treating great problems which emerges is often bewildering to the ordinary mind. The orthodox may revolt against the easy confidence with which the Zeitgeist puts aside 'miracles' and the supernatural,—not as disproved, but as obviously not worth the trouble of disproving. The agnostic is amazed to find that Arnold, while treating all theological dogma as exploded rubbish, expatiates upon the supreme value of the sublimated essence of theology. God, Arnold tells us, is not a term

of science, but a term of poetry and eloquence—a term 'thrown out' at a not fully grasped object of consciousness—a literary term, in short—with various indefinite meanings for different people.[1] The 'magnified and non-natural man' of whom theologians speak is to be superseded by the 'stream of tendency' or the 'not ourselves which makes for righteousness'; and, in expressing his contempt for the vulgar conceptions, he perhaps sometimes forgot his usual good taste, as in the famous reference to the three Lords Shaftesbury. Such phrases might be taken for the scoffing which he condemned in others. I glanced the other day at a satirical novel, in which the writer asks whether an old Irishwoman is to say, instead of 'God bless you,' 'the stream of tendency bless you.' I then opened the preface to Arnold's *God and the Bible* and found him making a similar criticism upon Mr. Herbert Spencer. Nobody, he observes, would say, 'The unknowable is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.'

Arnold's answer to his critic would, in fact, have been that he never proposed that the old Irishwoman should give up her form of expression. He professed to be simply explaining her real

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 12.

meaning. He apparently thought, as I have said, that a modified form of Catholicism would be the religion of the future; the modification amounting to this, that it would only profess to be poetry instead of science, and giving symbols 'thrown out' at truth, not dogmas with the validity of theorems in geometry. He argued not only that the Hebrew religion itself is to be taken by us in the poetical sense, but that by the prophets themselves it was never understood differently. So the text which says that 'Man must be born of a spirit' means only that man must be born of an influence; and, moreover, never meant anything more. This was the original sense of the first utterance, which was only twisted into pseudo-science by later dogmatists. It follows that orthodox theology is an 'immense misunderstanding of the Bible'—a misunderstanding because it takes poetry for prose. By clearing away the accretions we see that the Bible is to be read throughout in this sense; and therefore that, to restore its true value, we are not to throw it aside, but to take it as the original authors meant us to take it.

The weakness of the poetic or imaginative treatment is the tendency to confound a judgment

of beauty with a judgment of fact. A creed is so charming or so morally stimulating that it must be true. Arnold did not accept this way of putting it. He had too genuine a respect for the daylight of the understanding, too much hearty loyalty to the Zeitgeist and scientific thought to accept a principle which would lead to simple reaction and recrudescence of superstition. He unequivocally accepts the results obtained by German critics, heavy-eyed and pedantic as they may sometimes be, for he believes with all his heart in thorough, unflinching, scholar-like research. He will not shut his eyes or mistake mere æsthetic pleasure for logical conviction. But, he argues, the essence of the creed is precisely its moral beauty; the power with which it expresses certain ethical truths—its grasp of the doctrine (to quote his favourite, though I cannot think very fortunate, formula) that conduct is three-fourths of life, that it is the essence of the religion, or rather, is itself the religion; and that the whole framework of historical fact and ecclesiastical dogma is unimportant. We read Homer, he says, for our enjoyment, and to turn the book to our benefit.[1] We should read the

[1] *God and the Bible*, p. 99.

Bible in the same way. The truth of the Greek or Hebrew mythology and history is irrelevant. The true lights of the Christian Church, he says,[1] are not Augustine and Luther or Bossuet, but à Kempis and Tauler and St. Francis of Sales; not, that is, the legislators or reformers or systematisers of dogma, but the mystics and pietists and men who have uttered the religious sentiment in the most perfect form. It is characteristic that in his book upon St. Paul, while dwelling enthusiastically upon the apostle's ethical teaching, he says nothing of the work which to St. Paul himself, as to most historians, must surely have seemed important, the freeing of Christian doctrine from fetters of Judaism; and treats the theological reasons by which St. Paul justified his position as mere surplusage or concessions to contemporary prejudice.

The problem here suggested is a very wide one. We may agree that the true value of a religion is in its ethical force. We may admit that the moral ideas embodied in its teaching are the only part which is valuable when we cease to believe in the history or the dogma; and that they still preserve a very high value. We may still be edified by Homer or by Æschylus, or by Socrates and

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 290.

Epictetus, though we accept not a word of their statements of fact or philosophy. But can the essence of a religion be thus preserved intact when its dogma and its historical assertions are denied? Could St. Paul have spread the Church of the Gentiles without the help of the theories which Arnold regarded as accretions? Would the beautiful spirit of the mystics have conquered the world as well as touched the hearts of a few hermits without the rigid framework of dogmas in which they were set and the great ecclesiastical organisation for which a definite dogmatic system was required? We may love the mystical writers, but, without the organisers of Churches and creeds, can we believe that they would even have made a church for the world? To set forth a great moral ideal is undoubtedly an enormous service. But the prosaic mind will ask, Is it enough to present us with ideals? Do we not also require statements of fact? It is all very well to say be good, and to say this and that is the real meaning of goodness; but to make men good, you have also got to tell them why they should be good, and to create a system of discipline and dogma for effectually stimulating their love of goodness.

I do not presume to discuss such a point here.

I confine myself to saying that Arnold's solution of the difficulty not only shows admirable candour and courage, but may seem to correspond to the most probable goal of the modern evolution of thought. It often gives a singular impression to compare the apologists of orthodoxy in the present day with their predecessors of a past generation. The old divine used to prove the historical assertions of his creed by evidence and to demonstrate its dogmas by reasoning. He tried, at least, to 'confute' cavillers by argument. The modern apologist entirely changes the system. He admits that the evidence is inadequate, and that the dogmas, as formerly understood, were really false and repulsive. He accepts positions once supposed to be essentially sceptical. And yet, all the same, he ends by concluding that it does not matter. The sceptic was in the right; but in spite of this, believers are somehow justified. That strikes some people as dishonest, and the best excuse is that it is an approximation to Arnold's position. Agree fully and frankly that the value of a creed is not to be tested by its historical and philosophical validity; that it really belongs to the sphere of poetry and provides symbols for the emotions, not truths for the

understanding; that, therefore, all the argumentation about 'evidences' and so forth is the application of a totally inappropriate test; and you certainly reach an intelligible position. It is moreover one to which the modern mind, with its growing indifference to the old controversies, its apparently unaltered, if not growing, conviction that some religion is necessary, combined with the conviction that one set of dogmas is about as good as another, may seem to be approximating. The Churches would escape a good many difficulties, and apologists a good deal of trouble, in connecting their premisses with their conclusions, if they could boldly follow Arnold and say that they do not appeal to the reason but to the imagination. Leave out the awkward words 'I believe'; or substitute, 'I feign for purposes of edification,' and all would go right. Unity must be sought, not by the triumph of one set of dogmas, but all equally absolute, but by giving up dogma, or treating it as essentially poetry, and admitting that to take it as a prosaic statement of fact always is and always has been a blunder. It is true that the prosaic person has a difficulty in accepting this position. He will not admit that a religion is good for anything when it abandons its ancient claims to give

genuine knowledge as well as providing modes of utterance of our sentiments. The questions which arise are those which upon Arnold's method seem to be passed over. It is his indifference to them which gives sometimes the very erroneous impression of a want of seriousness. Arnold was undeniably and profoundly in earnest, though he seems scarcely to have realised the degree in which, to ordinary minds, he seemed to be offering not stones, but mere vapour when asked for bread. He felt that he was occupied with the most serious of problems, and he saw at least some of the conditions of successful treatment. On all sides his loyalty to culture (the word has been a little spoilt of late), his genuine and hearty appreciation of scholarship and scientific thought, his longing to set himself in the great current of intellectual progress, are always attractive, and are the more marked because of his appreciation (his excessive appreciation, may I say?) of the 'sweetness,' if not the light, of the Oxford Movement. If, indeed, his appreciation was excessive, I am conscious, I hope, of the value of the doctrine which led him. We ought, he says,[1] to have an 'infinite tenderness' for the popular science of religion. It is

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 303.

'the spontaneous work of nature, the travail of the human mind, to adapt to its grasp and employment great ideas of which it feels the attraction.' I feel the truth of this teaching more, I fear, than I have acted upon it. I belong, as I have said, to the prosaic class of mankind. We ought to catch at least something of Arnold's spirit, so far as to admit, at least, that the great problem is to reconcile unflinching loyalty to truth with tenderness 'infinite,' if possible, for the errors which are but a grasping after truth. If Arnold combined the two tendencies in a fashion of his own, he set a most valuable example, even to those who cannot think his method successful. He said of a great contemporary that he was always beating the bush without starting the hare. I am under the impression that Arnold, if he started the hare, did not quite catch it. But beating the bushes is an essential preliminary. He stirred and agitated many brains which could not be reached by sober argument or by coarser invective, and he applied good wholesome irritants to our stolid self-satisfaction. When one remarks how little is left of most philosophers in the way of positive result, and yet remembers gratefully the service they have done in the way of stimulus to thought, one may

feel grateful to a man who, while renouncing all claims to be a philosopher, did more than most philosophers to rouse us to new perception of our needs and was one of the most effective agents in breaking up old crusts of prejudice.

Putting on a mask, sometimes of levity, sometimes of mere literary dandyism, with an irony which sometimes is a little too elaborate, but which often expresses the keenest intelligence trying to pass itself off as simplicity, he was a skirmisher, but a skirmisher who did more than most heavily-armed warriors, against the vast oppressive reign of stupidity and prejudice. He made the old dragon Philistinism (to use his phrase) wince at times, and showed the ugliness and clumsiness of the creature; and after all he did it in a spirit as of one who recognised the monster was after all a most kindly monster at bottom. He may be enlisted in useful service if you can only apply the goad successfully, and made effective, in his ponderous way, like the Carthaginian elephants, if only you can mount his neck and goad him in the right direction. No single arm is sufficient for such a task; the dragon shakes himself and goes to sleep again in a stertorous and rather less complacent fashion, let us hope; and we feel that the

struggle will too probably endure till we have ceased to be personally interested.

I cannot, indeed, get it out of my head that we slow-footed and prosaic persons sometimes make our ground surer; and that, for example, poor Bishop Colenso, whom Arnold ridiculed as the typical Philistine critic, did some good service with his prosaic arithmetic. There are cases in which the four rules are better than the finest critical insight. But there is room for poets as well as for arithmeticians; and Arnold, as at once poet and critic, has the special gift—if I may trust my own experience—of making one feel silly and tasteless when one has uttered a narrow-minded, crude, or ungenerous sentiment; and I dip into his writings to receive a shock, unpleasant at times, but excellent in its effects as an intellectual tonic.

JOWETT'S LIFE[1]

THIS life of Jowett by two of his most enthusiastic and sympathetic disciples satisfies many demands of the art of biography. Jowett himself loved Boswell's model work as it deserves to be loved, and would have made it the standard of excellence. The unique combination of circumstances which enabled Boswell to turn out a masterpiece has not, and probably never will, be repeated. Jowett, in spite of some resemblances, noted by his biographers, was not a Johnson; and the biographers—the remark is, perhaps, equivocal—are clearly not Boswells. Boswell had the tact for selecting only such trifles as were characteristic, and I fear that they do not fully share that quality. Still, with the help of Jowett's letters and written meditations, they have brought

[1] *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett, M.A., Master of Balliol College, Oxford.* By Robert and Lewis Campbell. London, 1897. John Murray.

us face to face with the man; and should enable us to form a distinct portrait of a very interesting figure. One result may be emphatically recognised at the outset. Nobody can lay down these volumes without feeling that Jowett deserved the affection of his friends. He had his weaknesses, like Johnson; but we feel in his case, as in Johnson's, that the core of the man's nature was sweet, sound, and masculine. This is part of the explanation of a problem which, I must confess, has often appeared to me, as to others, to be rather enigmatic. What was the secret and the real nature of Jowett's remarkable influence? I had not the advantage of coming within his personal sphere, nor even of belonging to his beloved University. I had, however, the good fortune of knowing at an early period some of the group, among whom, as we are told, 'there sprang up what outsiders termed a sort of Jowett worship.' That group, it is added, did not form a 'mutual admiration society.' One reason is obvious: the bond of union was personal. The worship of Newman or of Carlyle meant, as a rule, sympathy with certain dogmas or the acceptance of a particular set of shibboleths, which at once marked a man as representing

a distinctive tendency in theology or politics. This could certainly not be said of Jowett's worshippers. Jowett did not himself accept any articulate philosophical doctrine. The admiration, therefore, was mainly for the man himself; and might be common to people who, starting from a general liberalism—to use the vaguest possible word—had reached very different conclusions; and might be followers of Comte, or of Hegel, or even careless Gallios, capable of very sharp criticisms both of their master and of each other. The outsider, meanwhile, was a little in the dark as to the precise nature of a tie which united the central member to disciples who dispersed along so many diverging radii.

The problem was the more difficult to a member of the sister University. An interesting essay might, I fancy, be written upon the nature and origin of the difference between the Oxford and the Cambridge spirit. Whatever the cause, one distinction is marked. Oxford has long been fertile in prophets; in men who cast a spell over a certain number of disciples, and not only propagate ideas, but exercise a personal sway. At Cambridge no such leader, so far as I can remember, presented himself in my time; and,

moreover, Cambridge men were generally inclined to regard their apparent barrenness with a certain complacency. Spiritual guides are troublesome personages. A prophet, perhaps we thought, is apt to be a bit of a humbug, and at any rate a cause of humbug in others. We had some very vigorous and excellent tutors, but they were rather anxious to disavow than to assert any such personal influence as is independent of downright logical argument. Perhaps this was partly due to the mathematical turn of Cambridge studies. At the time when Oxford was dimly troubled by the first rumours about German theology, Cambridge reformers were chiefly concerned to introduce a knowledge of the new methods of mathematical analysis, to which Englishmen had been blinded by a superstitious reverence for Newton. That was an excellent aim; but, of course, you cannot appeal to men's 'souls' in the name of the differential calculus. Even when Cambridge men took to the study of classical literature, they stuck to good, tangible matters of grammatical construction without bothering themselves about purely literary or philosophical interests. They did not deny the existence of the soul; but knew that it should be kept in its

proper place. It may be an estimable entity; but it also generates 'fads' and futile enthusiasms and gushing sentimentalisms. It should not be unduly stimulated in early years, but kept in due subordination to the calm understanding occupied with positive matters of fact. The opposite view is indicated by a remark of Jowett's upon Dr. Arnold. Arnold had his weak points intellectually, says Jowett, 'but in that one respect of inspiring others with ideals, there has been no one like him in modern times.' Arnold, beyond a doubt, was an admirable person; and few cases of the value of influence as understood by Oxford men are more remarkable. Considering the shortness of his life and the limits of his position, the impression which he made upon his contemporaries is not short of surprising. To the average reader of to-day it is probably interpreted for the most part by *Tom Brown's School-days*. That is a charming book, even when one's schooldays are over; but it then suggests certain misgivings. The Rugby men had their weaknesses. '"What a good man Walrond is!" said Professor Sellar to Matthew Arnold. "Ah!" replied Arnold, "we were all so good at Rugby." "Yes," retorted Sellar, "but he kept it up."' They

all, as it seems to an outsider, 'kept it up.' The very tone of voice of a true Rugbeian implied, modestly but firmly, that he was endowed with a 'moral consciousness.' He had a quasi-official right to share the lofty view which he had imbibed at the feet of the master. He always seemed to be radiating virtuous influences. A conscience is, no doubt, a very useful possession in early years. But when a man has kept one till middle life, he ought to have established a certain *modus vivendi* with it; it should be absorbed and become part of himself—not a separate faculty delivering oracular utterances. The amiable weakness of the Rugby school was a certain hypertrophy of the conscience. It had become unpleasantly obtrusive and self-assertive. In other words, they were decidedly apt to be moral prigs.

Jowett's influence was not exactly of this kind, but before asking what it was I must say something of one problem which is forced upon us by this book. Jowett was a man of wide philosophical culture. He was prominent in Oxford society during some remarkable intellectual changes. He lived there for some fifty-seven years. As an undergraduate he was a looker-on

at the singular and slightly absurd phenomenon called the Oxford Movement, and keenly interested in the contest finally brought to a head by his friend W. G. Ward. Soon afterwards he was a leading tutor, at a time when the most vigorous youths at Oxford were inclining rather in the direction of J. S. Mill, and some of them becoming disciples of Comte. His edition of St. Paul's Epistles made him an arch-heretic in the eyes of the High Church party, and his simultaneous appointment to the Greek Professorship gave the chance, of which its members were foolish enough to avail themselves, of putting him in the position of a martyr of free thought. His share in the *Essays and Reviews* (1860) made him a representative man in a wider sphere. Though we have now got to the stage of affecting astonishment at the sensation produced by the avowal of admitted truths in that work, nobody who remembers the time can doubt that it marked the appearance of a very important development of religious and philosophical thought. The controversy raised by *Essays and Reviews* even distracted men for a time from the far more important issues raised by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Jowett, then a little

over forty, was no doubt old enough to have some settled convictions, but young enough to be fully awake to the significance of the definite invasion of the old system of thought by the new doctrines of evolution and historical method. When, in 1870, he became Master of Balliol he was succeeded in the tutorship by his attached friend, T. H. Green, who introduced the Hegelianism which has since become so conspicuous in English philosophy, and had already been studied by Jowett. What may be the true meaning and tendency of these varying phases of opinion is a question to be answered by the rising generation. This, at least, is evident—Jowett was a man of mark and intellectual authority at a time when vital questions were being eagerly agitated and the most various conclusions reached. What had he to say to them? Will the future historian of English thought be able to show that any of the important contributions to speculation bear the impress of Jowett's intellect? The movement of the different currents of thought is too wide and complicated to be explained by any individual influence; but we might look to such a man as the best representative of some definite tendency,

or at least as having been a valuable expounder of some important aspect.

Is any phase of speculation marked by Jowett's personal stamp? That is the question which one naturally asks about a man who is a well-known writer upon philosophy, and one can hardly deny that the answer must be unequivocally in the negative. Jowett's biographers hold that he might have said something very important if he had found time. He had himself a lasting ambition to be a teacher. He had a habit of drawing out plans for future work. At the age of seventy he laid down a scheme for eight years of work: one year upon Plato, two upon Moral Philosophy, two upon a Life of Christ, one upon Sermons, and two upon a History of Early Greek Philosophy. We admire the sanguine spirit of the man; we feel his illusions to be pathetic; we envy the power of believing that at the fag-end of life, tasks can still be achieved which, taken separately, might well require years of devotion at the period of highest vitality. To most of us elders any similar fancies are as impossible as fancies of a sledge-journey to the North Pole. We may most sincerely regret that we cannot cherish them. We might do more

than we shall ever actually do if we could only continue to aim at a mark beyond our range; and it must be placed to Jowett's credit that the impulse to work remained so vigorous when all capacity for achievement was so soon to leave him. But, also, one cannot help asking whether Jowett at his best, and freed from the calls upon his energy, which took up so large a part of his time, could really have done anything great in these directions? What could a Life of Christ have been in his hands? 'Can I write like Renan?' he asks himself; and the answer is too clear. Could he have emulated the industry, close scholarship, and minute criticism of a German professor? That is, perhaps, still more out of the question, and one cannot feel that his failure has lost us anything more than an elegant essay balancing inconsistent theories. Jowett's biographers think that he could have written something of great value upon Moral Philosophy. Happily a man may be an admirable moralist in practice, though very vague in his theory of morals. Jowett might have been an excellent 'moralist' in the old Johnsonian sense—a forcible propounder of practical maxims for life and conduct—but however good the spirit of

his discursions into ethics, they certainly do not even suggest any new solution of the old difficulties.

In speaking of Jowett's general position in these matters, Dr. Abbott remarks that he had written passages in his edition of St. Paul's epistles, 'such as no other man of his age has put on paper.' Later distractions, however, made him 'wander into other paths.' He spent years upon his translations of Plato and Thucydides. He was overwhelmed (it is not wonderful) by the greatness of his self-imposed tasks; and the 'harsh reception of his theological work' disheartened him and made him fear that his writing might do as much harm as good. 'His sensitive nature received a wound from which it never quite recovered.' These remarks are characteristic, and illustrate painfully the difficulty the seeing oneself as others see us. It may not be strange that Jowett could not understand the impression which he was making; but to any one else the probable reception was obvious. I confess that I cannot see in the essays upon St. Paul what Dr. Abbott sees in them. A cordial admirer, I fully admit, is more likely to be right than one who looks from outside and in a spirit of antagonism. I cannot, indeed, believe by any

effort that the passages quite deserve this lofty eulogy, but I gladly admit that Dr. Abbott probably sees real merit to which I am blinded by prejudice or want of sympathy. I read the book, however, when it first appeared; I have turned to it since to verify my impressions; and I confess that I am afraid that they are such as would inevitably occur to any man of plain understanding. One instance will be ample. Jowett writes an essay upon the theory of the Atonement. He holds that 'the theory as ordinarily stated is repulsive. No unsophisticated mind will accept the doctrine that a just God pardons sinners in consideration of the suffering of a perfectly innocent man. In other words, the dogma as accepted by the Salvation Army, or even by Butler, revolts the conscience. He tries, therefore, to restate it in a variety of ways, and admits that the doctrine, turn and twist it as you will, remains morally objectionable. He suggests by way of escape that the erroneous version is produced by turning rhetoric into logic and mistaking a metaphor, one among many, for a kind of rigid legal formula. That may be true; and we will also suppose that St. Paul meant no more than a metaphor. But a 'metaphor,' unless it be a mere phrase, ought

surely to indicate some truth that can be indicated, if not accurately formulated. It is pathetic, and it was once very puzzling, to see how Jowett plays hide-and-seek with this ultimate difficulty. One point is clear to him: the death of Christ was 'the greatest moral act ever done in this world.' It was greater, let us say, than the death of Socrates or of any Christian martyr. If so, it was the most stimulating of examples. But to say that it was merely this is obviously to deprive it of all the old theological significance. It is to say nothing which might not be consistently admitted by Renan, or even by Voltaire, or by the most thorough-going Agnostic. Jowett can only reply by referring to a 'mystery,' though he admits that 'there may seem to be a kind of feebleness in falling back on mystery, when the traditional language of ages is so clear and explicit.' It amounts to saying, he admits, that we not only know nothing, but apparently never can know anything of the 'objective act' of reconciliation between God and man. Meanwhile the true difficulty is to see why there should be any mystery at all. The whole mystery is created by straining metaphors and 'turning rhetoric into logic.' Why not drop it?

The difficulty, of course, is not peculiar to Jowett.[1] I mention it to illustrate the difficulty of the intelligent youth who in those days tried to adopt Jowett as a guide. Such a one felt, if I may adapt one of Johnson's phrases, as though his master had pushed him over a cliff, and advised him to fall softly, or perhaps assured him that he was not falling at all. Before this time Jowett had been flirting with Hegelianism, and, without becoming a thorough-going disciple, was apparently attracted by the opportunities afforded by that system of saying and unsaying a thing at the same time. He puts aside all logical difficulties on the ground that somehow or other contradictory assertions may both be true. 'The notion that no idea can be composed out of two contradictory conceptions seems to arise out of the analogy of the sensible world.' A thing cannot be both white and black (rather white and not white) at the same time. But there is, it appears, no absurdity in supposing that the 'mental analysis even of a matter of fact should involve us in contradictions.' He imagines the 'old puzzles of the Eleatics' to be still insoluble, and infers apparently that we may assume without further trouble both that the will is free and that it

is not free. To some philosophers, I am aware, this has a meaning; but to common sense it presents itself simply as a very convenient plan for taking both sides of any important question. In later years, indeed, Jowett, while still having a certain leaning towards Hegel, became suspicious of metaphysics generally. Some knowledge of metaphysics, he says, 'is necessary to enable the mind to get rid of them.' Metaphysics ought, as he was always saying, to be subordinate to 'common sense,' whereas Coleridge had said that 'common sense should be based on metaphysics.'

The effect was that he decided to treat all problems in what he calls (in reference to free-will) the 'only rational way,' that is, 'historically.' You are, that means, to accept beliefs as facts without troubling about their reasons. The result of this method is curiously given in some notes of 1886, which, as Dr. Abbott tells us, were his 'last reflections.' This, says Jowett, is the age of facts which are 'too strong for ideas,' and of criticism which is 'too strong for dogma.' The Christian religion may change till miracles become absurd; the 'hope of immortality' mean 'only the present consciousness of goodness and of God'; the 'personality of God, like the immortality of man,

pass into an idea'; 'every moral act' be acknowledged to have a 'physical antecedent,' and 'doctrines become unmeaning words.' Yet, he says, the essence of religion 'may still be self-sacrifice' and so forth—'a doctrine common to Plato and to the Gospel.' This (which is, of course, a rough private note) surely amounts, as the Germans say, to emptying out the baby with the bath. Christianity will be evacuated of every element which is not common to Plato. Indeed, we may go further. Jowett proceeds to speak of partly accepting Mr. Herbert Spencer's Agnosticism; and though he always spoke with dislike of Comte and of Darwin, it is hard to see what positive objection he could make to either.

I confess, therefore, that I am simply puzzled when I find Jowett professing a belief in 'the best form of Christianity,' and his biographers fully accepting the statements. A Christianity without the supernatural, without doctrines, without immortality, and without a 'personal God' seems to be merely an alias for morality. Neither can I share Prof. Campbell's objection to a phrase of Carlyle. Carlyle, as we are reminded, had proposed an 'exodus from Houndsditch,' and yet 'the moment some one within the camp spoke

words of truth and soberness' (that is, in the *Essays and Reviews* article), broke out with the phrase 'the sentinel who deserts should be shot.' J. S. Mill, on the other hand, as we are reminded, approved of clergymen who remained within the Church so long as they could accept its formulæ 'with common honesty.' I agree with both Mill and Carlyle. The prosecutors held sincerely that the essayist was preaching doctrines utterly inconsistent with Christianity. They not only held this sincerely, but I cannot doubt that they were right in their belief. Accept Jowett's version and the Christian services will become an elaborate mystification. 'Prayer,' he says, '(for fine weather and so forth), as at present conducted, is an absurdity,' or 'an ambiguity of the worst kind.' How then could he join in prayers, which involve absurdity and ambiguity at every clause? How at least could he complain that men believing in the absurdities should try to turn him out? To them he appeared as a 'deserter,' or rather a traitor within the camp, and rightly so if judged by the inevitable consequences of his actions. Mill, no doubt, was also right in saying that Jowett was justified in remaining so long as he could do so in 'common honesty.' He did not

himself intend the consequences of his actions. His friend Stanley, who, as Carlyle used to say, was always boring holes in the bottom of the Church of England, was yet firmly convinced that he was helping the ship to float. I do not doubt the absolute sincerity of his and Jowett's conviction. But their fellow-passengers, who thought with equal sincerity that they were sending the ship to the bottom, inevitably desired to throw them overboard. Their good intention was no proof of the soundness of their calculation. Undoubtedly they meant well. 'Destroy the Church of England!' said Charles Buller, according to one of the best stories in this book. 'You must be mad! It is the only thing between us and real religion!' Free the Church, that is, from the fetters of Parliament and lay jurisdiction, and you will hand it over to the fanatics. There is doubtless much truth in the epigram, and if for 'real religion' we read 'fanaticism,' Jowett might have accepted the saying. He wished to keep the element of natural belief—of 'soberness and truth'—within the Church; and while he could do so, consistently with 'common honesty,' he was personally justified. But there is another danger. When men of his ability

defend the use of superstitious observances as 'metaphorical' or popular versions of truths, they may be playing into the hands of the superstitious. They sanction a device which can be turned against them. Other people will combine superstition and reason to the profit of superstition. Divines have lately discovered how to accept the critical results which shocked readers of *Essays and Reviews*, and yet to accept the whole theory of priestly magic. The compromise may result in the enslavement of reason instead of the neutralising of superstition. I know not what may be the result to the Church of England, but the enterprise attempted in the best possible faith by Jowett and his friends, seems to be injurious to the higher interests of intellectual honesty. It was a hopeless endeavour to hide irreconcilable contrasts and pretend that they did not exist.

Jowett sincerely held 'Christianity' to be in some shape the great force on the side of the moral elevation of mankind. When removing what seems to others the very essence of the creed, he really supposed himself to be only removing 'incrustations.' That he could hold that position sincerely implies, as I fancy, an intellectual weakness admitted by his biographers.

He catches aspects of opinions and expresses them pithily, but he never can concentrate his mind or bring his doctrine to a focus. His writing becomes discontinuous, he wanders round and round problems without distinctly answering them or bringing the whole to an issue. He plays with philosophical principles without ever exactly saying Yes or No. And, therefore, he would seem to be less qualified for exercising an influence than more vigorous, if more one-sided, men. What are you to make of a guide who, so far from saying which is the right path, objects to decidedly committing himself to any one? His pupil Green could at least declare that Hegel would take us out of the labyrinth; but Jowett could only think that perhaps Hegel might lead to some interesting points of view—not really so much better than others. Maurice's disciples, again, complained, we are told, that Jowett would persist in silence about their leader. 'I shall never join,' he said in answer, 'with that modern Neoplatonism—it is so easy to substitute one mysticism for another.' The same view perhaps made him dislike Carlyle and Froude as romantics, if not charlatans. Newman and the later ritualists represent for him the natural

enemies of common sense. But then where would common sense lead? Voltaire, we may say, was an incarnation of common sense, and of Voltaire Jowett asserted, 'somewhat perversely,' that he had done more good than all the fathers of the Church put together. The 'perversity' is obvious, for Voltaire's desire to crush the '*infame*' was clearly not to Jowett's taste. The school which perhaps represented most clearly the development of the eighteenth century philosophy was that of J. S. Mill, but of the Utilitarians Jowett always spoke with marked dislike. Young men, as a rule, like a leader who has some distinct aim, good or bad, and if Jowett were to be judged by that test one would say that no one of his time was less qualified to be a leader. To a distinct view of the importance of some solution he seems to have joined the profound conviction that no conceivable solution would hold water. 'He stood,' says one of his pupils, in a rather different sense, 'at the parting of many ways,' and he wrote, one must add, 'No thoroughfare' upon them all.

Jowett's influence, then, was hardly that of a consistent or confident guide in speculation. It was not less real and perhaps something much

better, though to define it precisely would require a personal knowledge which I do not possess. There is abundant proof in these volumes of his great power of attaching men of all varieties. All his friendships, we are told, were life-long. In spite of oddities and little asperities, he never apparently had a personal quarrel. Like Dr. Johnson, he loved women and children, and felt as strongly as the doctor the importance of 'keeping his friendships in repair.' From the earliest Oxford days he formed close alliances; as the old friends dropped off, he drew new recruits from his pupils; and he kept up intimacies with many who had passed to wider scenes of action. A man who is 'nicknameable' must be a good fellow, and the phrase 'Old Jowler,' with its vague suggestion of a surly but trusty watch-dog, fits a man who could attach in spite of external crustiness. There is only one aspect, however, upon which it may be permissible for an outsider to dwell. Jowett, it strikes one forcibly as one reads, was the last and one of the finest products of the old school of 'dons.' He came to the front before the old system had been thrown into distraction by University Commissions, and though he was an important leader

during the subsequent changes, he was never in perfect sympathy with reformers who would radically alter the system. I have often wished that some skilful hand would draw a portrait of the old college don before he is finally numbered with the dodos. I present the suggestion to any one in want of a setting for a novel of 'sixty years since.' A college don was for the most part a young clergyman anxious to succeed to a living and marry a wife. For him, a fellowship was a mere step on the path to comfort. But some men, by external fate or idiosyncrasy, were doomed to permanent celibacy. Then they took one of two paths—either they acquired a taste in port-wine and became soured, or mildly (sometimes more than mildly) sybaritical; or else they accepted the college in place of a family, and felt for it a devotion such as an old monk may have had for his convent. It was their world; their whole 'environment'; the object of a local patriotism as intense as could ever animate patriots in a wider sphere. A touching anecdote tells how Whewell, the typical Cambridge don, begged, when dying, to be raised in his bed that he might have one more glance at the great court of Trinity. That was the last flash of an enthusiastic

love for the scene so intimately associated with boyish aspirations and manly energies. Jowett's love of Balliol was equally intense, and is the most characteristic part of his career. Balliol had absorbed him. 'The college,' he said, 'is the great good and comfort of my life.' 'Make the college beautiful,' was one of his last sayings. Some men have joined equal devotion to a college to a really low ideal of its true functions, but Jowett's ideal was worthy of a man of keen intellectual interest in the great problems of his day. His college deserved devotion; it had an almost unique position; and, as outsiders must grant, had 'produced' a longer list of eminent men than almost any rival that can be mentioned. The phrase 'produced,' too, had more than its usual propriety. It is generally equivalent to 'not extinguished,' but it is undeniable that Jowett somehow acted as a positive and lasting stimulant upon his pupils.

This dominant passion seems to explain and to reconcile us to Jowett's obvious foibles. To the old dons of the narrower variety the college became an ultimate end; if it taught young men, it deserved gratitude for undertaking a troublesome and strictly superfluous duty; and any

attempt to tamper with its constitution, in order to make it a better school, was regarded as a sacrilege. Jowett was free from this superstition in its extremer form. He felt as strongly as any reformer that colleges could only justify their independence by thorough educational efficiency; but he was equally clear that in point of fact their efficiency could only be preserved by maintaining their independence. The characteristic college system was admirable in his eyes. An undergraduate is not to be a mere student, after the German fashion, but the member of a little corporate body, imbibing a spirit of loyalty, and subject to the discipline and the judicious direction of the college tutors. This was the valuable and even vital part of the English University system, which in Jowett's hands, more than in any one's, was a reality. He never, we are told, got over the shyness caused by his temperament; he was capable of persistent silence and of decisive snubbing; he could tell a youth, who addressed him, to hold his tongue rather than talk such nonsense; and one can very well believe that he was not universally popular. Everybody is not grateful for having his knuckles rapped at the right moment, though the rap may represent a

sense of duty overpowering reluctance to speak. At any rate, the tendency to administer a good tonic, bitter or not, became part of his nature. He was, as Professor Campbell puts it, an 'irrepressible mentor.' He had experience enough to know what is the general fate of good advice, especially when the recipient has no longer the malleability of youth. But he advised at all hazards, in season and out of season. When he sees a friend in danger of relaxing his zeal, even under the pressure of sorrow, he cannot help applying the goad. He may help his friend at least to 'pull himself together'; and no doubt there are times when it does a man good to have a thorough shake. The advice, too, seems always to have been prompted by genuine goodwill which generally disarmed resentment. One feels, however, that there is a certain humorous side to the propensity. When a man sees his old schoolmaster, he generally looks back upon the old emotion of awful reverence as a quaint memory which has no living force left in it. But in Jowett's mind the relation seems to have presented itself as though it were as permanent and indissoluble as marriage. Once his pupil, you were not the less his pupil, though you might have

become a judge, or a bishop, or a Cabinet Minister. You were absorbed in State affairs instead of the study of Plato; but you would still be the better for a friendly crack of the old whip. Jowett was charged with having thought too much of genius in early years and of success in later. He measured a man by what he achieved and not by his capability of achieving; and was accused of being a little too fond of the 'great.' This, again, coincides with the natural view of the college tutor. He loves his pupils, it is true, but he always loves them as members of the college. He wishes to raise a harvest of first-class men, and believes a first-class to be an infallible indication of merit, and must be more than human if he does not exaggerate its importance. He wishes to see the college boards ornamented with long lists of men distinguished in their later career; to turn out men whose portraits may be hung in the college hall; and naturally thinks of it as a personal injury, or, which is the same thing, as an injury to the college, if some man of genius fails to obtain tangible honours. It is not that the genius is necessarily inferior—and Jowett could recognise, when it was fairly put before him, the inadequacy

of success as a test of merit—but that the genius has not fulfilled the true final end of man, the glorification of his college. A man might fail at the Bar or in Parliament, and yet be successful in the eyes of 'all-judging Jove'; but even Jove could not think much of a man who failed to promote the interests of Balliol. Unless he could do something for the college he was of no use in the world. Jowett's interest in his pupils was most admirable; he spared neither time nor trouble as a tutor; he did more for his men as a master than all the Cambridge heads of houses (in my time, at least) put together; he was the most generous and open-handed of men, whenever the opportunity offered; if his shyness made it hard for him to be on easy terms with some of his pupils, he could at least be an 'irrepressible' and inexorable mentor. It was the intense interest of a captain in his crew; and the friendships, doubtless most genuine, were not simply personal. Jowett, one fancies, could not separate himself even in thought from Balliol; membership of the college was not an accident superadded to him or his friends, but an essential part of their personal identity, and therefore it was impossible to abstract from their effect on the

college. Perhaps, one may guess, this went for a good deal in his own appreciation, if it existed, of 'the great.' Jowett, as Professor Campbell remarks, became so practical from the time of his coming to rule the college that some people thought that he was losing his interest in theology. He threw most of his energy into the task of improving the college, materially as well as morally. He spent his own money upon new buildings and a new cricket-ground, and so forth, and appealed to all his old friends to support him. He had, that is, to acquire the great art of stimulating the flow of subscriptions, and seems to have become, if the word may be allowed, a most accomplished 'tout.' Naturally, for this purpose, as well as for advancing the interests of his pupils, the support of the great and rich was of the highest importance. They were the predestined milch-cows who had to be skilfully manipulated. It is impossible to learn that art thoroughly without regarding your victims with a certain complacency. In order that their power and their purses are to be turned to the right account, one must cultivate their sympathies, and, without undue subservience, of which there seems to be no ground for accusing Jowett, one must

adopt the mental attitude from which the value of wealth and influence receives fair recognition. They must be courted, not from snobbishness or personal motives, but from a hearty appreciation of their utility as possible supporters of the good cause. Another peculiarity of the don has some meaning too. The old college don often professed to look down upon the outside world; but was conscious at heart that the world is a little inclined to retort by calling him a rusty pedant. He was never better pleased than when he could fairly show that he too was a man of true literary and social culture—able to judge the last poem or novel, as well as to lecture upon Plato and Æschylus. Jowett's cordial spirit of hospitality, was fostered and stimulated by this sentiment. He drew all manner of distinguished people to Balliol Lodge in later years; he would show them—as he could well show them in the time of H. J. S. Smith—that Balliol too was a centre of enlightenment; and he could prove to Oxford in general that a college might be attractive to the foremost statesmen and men of letters. He could do so, of course, because his hospitality was thoroughly spontaneous, and his friendship with eminent writers, such as Tennyson, Browning, and George

Eliot, rested upon genuine appreciation. But a certain additional flavour was given by the collection in the shadow of the old college buildings of people at home in circles wider than the academical.

Jowett was Balliol and Balliol was Jowett. His foibles—they do not seem to have been very serious—were consequences of this tacit identification. To make the college as great a factor as possible in the higher ranks of English society, to extend and strengthen its influence in every direction, was to fulfil the main purpose of his life. And that—as might be illustrated by the history of larger societies which have tried to influence the outside world—involves a certain amount of mutual accommodation. 'To do much good,' says Jowett, in 1883, 'you must be a very honest and able man, thinking of nothing else day and night; and you must also be a considerable piece of rogue, having many reticences and concealments.' 'A good sort of roguery,' he adds, 'is never to say a word against anybody, however much they may deserve it.' That is a version of some very orthodox phrases about the wisdom of the serpent and being all things to all men. Jowett in this sense may be called a bit of a 'rogue'; only remembering that his roguery

meant no more than a little difficulty in distinguishing between the interests of Balliol and the interests of the universe. In one direction it brought him into direct collision with a more advanced wing of reformers. Pattison imagined that the primary end of a university was to diffuse intellectual light, and inferred the propriety of devoting college revenues to the 'endowment of research.' There, as we find, Jowett had his reserves. He drew the line distinctly at the point at which the interests of the university might conflict with the interests of the colleges. To divert money from 'prize fellowships' to professorships was to sacrifice a stimulus to students and a certain bond of connection between the colleges and the outside world, in order to enable a few men to devote themselves to 'minute philosophy' and elaborate pursuit of useless knowledge. He looked with suspicion upon certain tendencies of modern Oxford. The present teaching, he says (about 1878), is 'utterly bad for students,' but 'flattering to the teacher.' The old-fashioned college tutor, if he did his duty, gave 'catechetical' lectures; that is, he dealt with students individually, stimulated their minds, and investigated their progress. The new professor

gives smart lectures, lets the pupils pick up what crumbs they can, but aims at winning praise for his eloquence and does not care whether his hearers are really able to follow him or at most catch the art of stringing smart phrases into a leading article. He is, in short, thinking about himself instead of his college, and has lost the old corporate spirit which was so fully imbibed by Jowett. Jowett's conservatism may have been well or ill judged; I am only concerned to say that it was at least characteristic. The old college system which he had worked so efficiently, must, he held, in no case be lowered in efficiency. He looked rather coldly, for example, upon the movement for women's education, because he thought it likely to interfere at various points with the old order, and evidently thought that Pattison's ideas were calculated to hamper the colleges without better result than endowing facile orators and useless investigation of trifles. It would diminish the educational power of the colleges in order to help the accumulation of useless knowledge dear in the eyes of Dryasdust.

The question as to the true theory of universities is a wide one, and I will not venture even to hint at any opinion about it. What is plain is

that Jowett substantially adhered to the older doctrine. Even if 'research' were really stimulated by substituting professors for college tutors its value was doubtful. 'Is learning of any use?' he asks, and he replies that it is worse than useless except as a stimulant to thought and imagination. He thought that Green's lectures did harm by diverting lads from 'poetry and literature' to wandering in the barren fields of metaphysics. Young men, the implication seems to be, should not aim at conquering any province of knowledge —the conquest must be superficial or won at the price of one-sided and narrow development. A premature specialist is a mental cripple—a prodigy made by bandaging the vital organs. And what is true of metaphysics and 'learning' is equally true of theology. If Jowett's influence upon the outside world was, as I have suggested, not altogether good, it might well be excellent in the college so understood. A man with a definite creed is tempted to instil it into his pupils. He will give them a ready-made set of dogmas, and try to frighten them out of obnoxious lines of inquiry. Jowett at least could not make the college into a caucus for the support of a sect. As Pater reports, part of his charm was owing to

a certain mystery about his own philosophic and other opinions.' He was throwing out suggestions, not imposing opinions; going about like a Socrates cross-examining and dislodging old prejudices with a happy impartiality, not dogmatising or enlisting recruits for any definite party. The college was to be a gymnasium to strengthen the mental fibre, not a place of drilling according to any regulation. What was a defect in a philosopher might be an excellence in a teacher. Of the disciples of Newman, half were permanently enslaved without ever looking at the doctrine from the outside, and the other half, who ultimately rebelled, suffered permanently from the dislocating effect of the revulsion. Jowett's pupils had at least not to lament that their minds had been put into a strait-waistcoat, injurious even if ultimately thrown aside.

In this sense we may understand Jowett's 'influence' as identical with the influence of the college which he did so much to mould. You might not learn anything very definite, but you were subject to a vigorous course of prodding and rousing, which is perhaps the best of training for early years. Jowett is judged from a wrong point of view when we try to regard him as a

leader of thought; but his influence was excellent as an irritant, which at least would not allow a man to bury himself in intellectual slumbers. You might be propelled in any direction, but at least you would not stand still. How much has been done by Balliol is not for me to say; but Jowett's real influence is to be found by considering him as an intrinsic element of Balliol. And this may suggest a final remark. The last ten years of life, as Jowett frequently remarked, are the best: best, because you are freest from care, freest from illusion and fullest of experience. They must no doubt be fullest of experience; they may be freest from care, if you are head of a college, and have no domestic ties; but, unluckily, the illusions which have vanished generally include the illusion that anything which you did at your best had any real value, or that anything which you can do hereafter will even reach the moderate standard of the old work. One of the advantages of Jowett's identification of himself with his college was perhaps that he was never freed from this illusion. He won the advantage at a heavy price—the price of not knowing the greatest happiness. But a man who is swallowed up in a corporate body, which will outlast himself, acquires a kind of derivative

immortality. His own life is only an element in the more permanent life. His work could be carried on by his successors, as the buildings which he helped to erect would remain for future generations. A man in that position might naturally fancy that as his authority and his experience grew with age he was stamping himself more effectively upon the organism of which he was a member; and in that sense hope, in spite of Dryden, to receive from 'the last dregs of life' 'what the first sprightly runnings could not give.' That is an enviable frame of mind.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES[1]

FEW modern writers have roused a stronger feeling of personal affection than O. W. Holmes. His friends, known and unknown, have naturally looked forward to a life which might be complementary to the autobiography implicitly contained in his writings. Mr. Morse, to whom it has fallen to supply this want, apologises by anticipation for partially disappointing their expectations. They will ask, he thinks, for more correspondence, and his answer is the very conclusive one that more correspondence is not forthcoming. Dr. Holmes, it appears, disliked letter-writing; and, although he systematically replied to hosts of unknown admirers, wrote comparatively little to his own circle of intimates. The unknown admirers appear to have kept his answers to themselves, considering them as autographs or

[1] *Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes.* By John T. Morse, Jr.

literary curiosities not to be dignified as 'letters.' I certainly regret with Mr. Morse that more of these documents have not been sent to him. There might have been formed a book which I have often desiderated,—a model letter-writer for the use of editors. It would have been exceedingly welcome. The problem how to tell a young author plainly that his rhymes are rubbish, and yet give no pain to an innocent aspirant, has weighed upon the souls of many sitters in the critical chair. A young author once showed me letters from two of the most distinguished men of the time, one of whom, while not committing himself, somehow suggested that he might be addressing the coming Shakespeare; while the other roundly declared that most lads had put better work in their waste-paper basket. They meant much the same thing, and Dr. Holmes was one of the few men who might have fused the two letters and combined courtesy with the wholesome truth. I, for one, should have been glad to have had the secret communicated, or, at least, a few examples given of the method. It is some comfort to be told that even his good-nature was sometimes requited with abuse. In any case, as Mr. Morse had not the materials, his

excuse is unanswerable. One good result is that the life is given in two volumes of modest size; and for the record of so simple a history that seems to be ample. We do not, perhaps, know very much more than an attentive reader could infer from Dr. Holmes's own writings; but the facts are brought together in a definite and authentic shape, and combined in a simple and agreeable narrative.

Every reader of the *Autocrat* has his own distinct image of the author. As he remarks himself in a characteristic passage, there are three people on each side of every dialogue; the real John, and John's ideal John, and Peter's John; and no doubt there may be a real Holmes, different both from the Holmes of Holmes's own imagination and the reader's Holmes. There are, however, very few people of whom one believes that the three have a more substantial identity. The true man, as every one remarks, shows himself with all his idiosyncrasies in every page of his writing. This suggests certain difficulties for the writer. Mr. Morse observes that the true Holmes was a New Englander 'from the central thread of his marrow to his outermost rind.' That is undeniable; but Mr. Morse proceeds to answer that

nagging critic, who is invisibly present whenever one writes, and who hereupon suggests that Holmes was provincial. Mr. Morse replies that no creative writer, except Shakespeare, who has been cosmopolitan has also made himself a 'place in the hearts of mankind.' I should myself reply by denying that Shakespeare was an exception. Nobody, surely, ever reflected more fully and faithfully the great imaginative movement of his own time; and, if we knew the people of Stratford-on-Avon and the frequenters of the Globe Theatre as we know the people of Scott's Edinburgh, I suspect that we should recognise the Shallows and the Falstaffs of the plays as clearly as we recognise Scott's friends in the Waverley Novels. Or to drop Shakespeare, who is apt, I sometimes fancy, to intrude a little too often, was there ever any one who was at once more full of personal and local idiosyncrasies, and, at the same time, more thoroughly 'cosmopolitan,' than Montaigne?—one of the numerous list of authors to whom, as Mr. Morse reminds us, Holmes has been compared. A man surely need not cease to be cosmopolitan because he is provincial, any more than he ceases to be an athlete because he plays the game of his country—cricket in England and

baseball in America. What interests us in the sport is the display of strength and activity: which may be shown in one game as well as another. The great writer is great because he displays a powerful intellect or a vivid imagination, and does not cease to be great because he applies his reasoning to particular questions or casts his imagery into the artistic mould of the day. There are obvious dangers in 'provincialism.' A man shut up in a village may be ignorant of the thoughts that are stirring outside; he may express himself in a dialect unintelligible to the larger world, or his mind may be atrophied for want of collision and excitement, and he may therefore limit himself to trifles interesting to a petty circle alone. But every man has got to be incarnate at a particular time and place, and to apply his mind to the questions which are stirring in them. Holmes was not the less a New Englander because he was also an individual; nor the less a citizen of the great world because he belonged to this particular province. The New England of his day, whatever its limitations, was seething with important movements as interesting, in slightly different applications, on this side of the Atlantic as well as on the other; and the fact

that Holmes looked at them from a New England point of view does not show that he did not appreciate their wider significance.

His characteristic nationality has, however, one result; namely, that in criticising Holmes one seems to be criticising New England or the United States. That is always a little awkward for an Englishman. To speak of Americans is to steer between opposite difficulties. One fears to fall into the old tone, when poor Mrs. Trollope and the critics of her day caused all the wrath of the democrat under the sneers of kid-gloved gentility, while, on the opposite side, there are certain commonplaces about Shakespeare and community of race, which are not precisely true, and are apt to be flung back contemptuously in one's face. There is a more personal difficulty for such Englishmen as have received the hospitality of the society which Holmes frequented. Those to whom the name recalls the actual presence and the vivid memory of Emerson and Hawthorne and Longfellow and Lowell, can hardly trust themselves to speak with due critical coolness. A writer, especially, who has many recollections, which, for good reasons, he is unwilling to manufacture into 'reminiscences,' almost feels his tongue tied. I

think of a young gentleman who, in the heat of the Civil War, was most courteously welcomed by the men I have mentioned, and who is half afraid to give full utterance to feelings which might seem overstrained, and yet equally anxious not to appear deficient in warmth of gratitude. I must, however, venture to make a few of the remarks about Holmes which are suggested by this biography; though I am not quite sure whether the vividness of certain very pleasant memories is a qualification or the reverse.

I have said that Holmes's career was singularly simple. He was born in 1809, and passed a long life almost continuously at Boston and the immediate neighbourhood, his only long absence being caused by two years of medical studies at Paris. On returning he set up as a physician without obtaining much practice. He married in 1840, in 1847 became professor in the medical school at Harvard, and held the office for thirty-five years. He retired in 1882, at the age of seventy-three, and survived as a venerated and happy old man till 1894. His works are not voluminous; and, though he had published some of his best verses before he was thirty, he was nearly fifty before he began the series of essays which really

made him famous. Few popular authors have had a narrower escape from obscurity. He would, in any case, have been remembered in his own circle as a brilliant talker, and there would have been some curiosity as to the writer of the *Last Leaf* and two or three other poems. But had it not been for the judicious impulse given by his friend Lowell which induced him to make his appearance as the 'autocrat,' his reputation would have resembled that of Wolfe, of 'not a drum was beat' celebrity. Who, it would have been asked, was the author of the few lines which we all know by heart? and we should have turned up the article devoted to him in a biographical dictionary. But he would not have revealed himself with that curious completeness upon which all his critics have remarked. He often heard, as he says in an interesting letter, that he 'had unlocked the secret of some heart which others, infinitely more famous, infinitely more entitled to claim the freedom, have failed to find opening for them.' He cannot help believing that 'there is some human tone in his written voice which sometimes finds a chord not often set vibrating.' The secret of this gift is not hard to penetrate, though this biography will enable readers to understand it a little more fully.

He remarks in the same letter that his life was 'rather solitary than social'; and the society which he did frequent was not in one of the greatest centres of intellectual movement. In certain ways, too, even Bostonians must admit that the social atmosphere was of a kind to nip some of the luxuriant growths congenial to older abodes of art and letters. Holmes's attachment to his surroundings was as keen as if the conditions had been of the most genial. Indeed, he illustrates what has become a commonplace. Americans, as Colonel Chester proved, often take with special enthusiasm to genealogy; although the interest of the study would at first sight appear to be less in a country where the claims of long descent are supposed to be ridiculous. This perhaps illustrates the principle which accounts for Scottish skill in gardening. The materials to be mastered are not so multitudinous, and when you cannot trust to nature your own energy may be stimulated. So Holmes cherished whatever could be called historically interesting in his own country, because there was so little spontaneously supplied. Men who live in the shadow of Westminster Abbey or go to universities which the great men of many centuries have filled with associations, are

apt to become a little bored with the topic. Holmes loved the old 'gambrel-roofed house' in which he was born, all the more because a house which existed at the time of Washington represented exceptional antiquity in America. The deluge of growing civilisation sweeps away such relics of the past so rapidly that their scarcity gives them exceptional value. The buildings of Andover Academy and of the Harvard University are not, in themselves, comparable to Eton or to King's College, Cambridge. But they represent the only persistent thread of historical continuity in the country, and the affection which they excite is proportioned, not to their absolute grandeur or antiquity, but to the degree in which they have to satisfy whatever instinctive affections there may be in their alumni. Holmes certainly loved his old home, and cherished his school and college associations as ardently as if he had been born in a Norman manor-house or played his boyish games under the statue of Henry VI. As he grew up his patriotism did not diminish in intensity. All that happened was that he became qualified to catch its comic aspects. When the 'young fellow they call John' laid down the famous proposition that 'Boston State House is the hub of the solar

system,' and adds that 'you couldn't pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar,' the Autocrat accepts the 'satire of the remark,' and admits that the 'axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the centre of each and every town and city.' But he does not pretend to conceal that the sentiment, outrageous if literally accepted, tickles his fancy agreeably. When we drink a man's health after dinner, we often express an estimate of his virtues which we might sometimes shrink from maintaining in cold blood. Yet our sentiment may be essentially genuine, though we have dropped some implied qualifications. Holmes as a man shares the young fellow's enthusiasm, though he wishes us to understand that he is aware in cold blood that it is not quite the whole truth. The little deformed gentleman in the *Professor* is a still more vigorous mouthpiece of the same sentiment. 'A new race, and a whole new world for the newborn human soul to work in! And Boston is the brain of it, and has been any time these hundred years! That's all I claim for Boston, that it is the thinking centre of the continent, and therefore of the planet!'—in which respect its superiority to Philadelphia and New York is easily demonstrated.

The little gentleman is one of Holmes's most spirited characters, and makes a very convenient organ for the utterance of opinions not to be turned into serious dogmas—but also not to be overlooked. Boston is an ideal as well as a real city; it represents 'the American principle,' whatever that may precisely be. It is the three-hilled city as opposed to the seven-hilled city or reason against Rome. Democratic America has a different humanity from feudal Europe, 'and so must have a new divinity.' Religion has to be 'Americanised,' and Boston is in the van of the struggle.

This might suggest a good many remarks to which Holmes would, perhaps, leave his deformed gentleman to reply. He has not committed himself to an unreserved support of a personage who reflects only one of his moods. One point, however, has to be noticed. Holmes, like others, had revolted against Calvinism as represented by the Westminster Confession. Many pages in his essays are directed against the old-fashioned creed; and, as we are told, made him the object of warm denunciations by the orthodox. Young people, Mr. Morse informs us, were forbidden to read the *Autocrat*, and *Elsie Venner* was regarded as a

dangerous manifesto. This, it must be admitted, sounds strange at the present day. Were any books 'ever more obviously harmless? People who remember certain English controversies about Maurice, which happened a little before the appearance of the *Autocrat*, may succeed in understanding why, in the country of the Puritans, Holmes should have passed for a heresiarch. Yet it now requires an effort to put oneself in that position, and certainly Holmes's remarks would now hardly excite a shudder in the best-regulated families. Yet they represented what seems to have been the most important passage of his mental history. The old Puritanism, one may guess, appeared to him in a new light when he had sat at the feet of Parisian professors. The old Boston, at any rate, was not quite the 'hub of the universe' in a physiological point of view; and he fancied, when the old and the new currents met, a good deal of the sediment of old-fashioned dogma would be precipitated. Still, the old problem which Calvinism had answered in its own way came up in a new form. The doctrine of hereditary sin might be abandoned, but the problems of scientific 'heredity' took its place. Jonathan Edwards's discussions of moral responsibility have still a serious meaning

when they are dissociated from the ghastly visions of hell-fire. Holmes gave more place to these controversies than some of his readers liked; and I need say nothing as to the merit of his own conclusions. They interest us chiefly because they give rise to that provoking book, *Elsie Venner*. I call it 'provoking' merely because it will not square nicely with any orthodox canons of criticism. In the first place it has an air of being didactic, or is a book with a tendency, or, in the old-fashioned phrase, is a novel with a purpose. I confess that I should have no objection to it upon that ground. I always found *Sandford and Merton* a delightful work in my childhood, and I partly preserve that degrading taste. I like books with a moral. Some authors, it is true, are cramped by their morals, and occasionally tripped up into flat absurdity. Still, a writer generally derives a certain unction from the delusion that he is preaching as well as story-telling; and so long as any one is working with a will, and defying the critics and all their ways, he has the root of the matter in him. Holmes, it must be remarked, did not suppose that he was proving anything in *Elsie Venner*; he recognised the truth of the axiom propounded in the *Rose and the Ring* that blank verse is not

argument; and the imaginary behaviour of an impossible being cannot possibly lead to any conclusion. When we meet a being who is half woman and half a snake it will be time to settle the moral code for judging her. Holmes, in fact, says in his preface that he only took an imaginary case in order to call attention to the same difficulty in the common course of things. To that I can see no objection. Clearly, every great tragedy involves some interesting question of casuistry; and casuistry may repay the debt by suggesting a good plot for a novel. The only question is, whether the extravagant hypothesis, be it purely fantastic or contrived to illustrate a point in ethics, has really been turned to good account. I confess to a conflict of feeling which, I suspect, is shared by others. The book makes me read it whenever I take it up, and yet I am never satisfied. Perhaps it is that I want more rattlesnake; I want to have the thrill which my ancestors felt when they told legends of were-wolves; I wish the snake-woman to be as poetical as Coleridge's Geraldine, to tremble while I read, and to be encouraged in my belief by such an infusion of science as will reconcile me to the surroundings of the nineteenth century in England. That is, no doubt, to wish

at the lowest that Holmes could have been combined with Hawthorne—not to suggest the creator of Caliban—and that their qualities could have coalesced with as little interference as those of Elsie and the snake. So much is suggested that one wants a more complete achievement. The fact is simply, I suppose, that Holmes had not the essential quality of the inspired novelist. He did not get fairly absorbed in his story and feel as though he were watching, instead of contriving, the development of a situation. That, for example, is the way in which Richardson declares himself to have written, and which partly explains the fascination to our forefathers of his moralising and long-winded narratives. Holmes is distinctly a spectator from outside, and his attention is too easily distracted. I do not in the least object to a novelist discoursing or supplying comments if it be his natural vein; I am not simple-minded enough to care for the loss of the illusion. But the novelist should not give an analysis in place of a concrete picture, or wander into irrelevant remarks. Now, Holmes's intellect is so lively and unruly that the poor snake-lady gets too often squeezed into the background. He is struck by the peculiarities of New England villages, their

toasts, or their 'co-lations,' or their 'hired men,' and is immediately plunged into vivacious descriptions and disquisitions. We have to change moods too rapidly; to feel on one page a shudder at the uncanny being, with something not human looking out of her eyes; and, on the next, to be laughing at the queer social jumble of a village gathering. If, in spite of these artistic defects, the book somehow takes so firm a grasp of one's memory, it is the stronger proof of the excellence of the materials which form so curious a mosaic. After all, the writer never goes to sleep, and that is a remit which redeems a good many faults of design.

One condition of the excellence of the *Autocrat* and its successors is of course that in them this irrepressible vivacity and versatility finds in him a thoroughly appropriate field. They have, as we see at once, the merits of the best conversation. Mr. Morse, in speaking of this, assures us that Holmes's talk was still better than his writing. We have unfortunately to take such statements on faith. No one, except Boswell, has ever succeeded in the difficult task of giving us a convincingly accurate report of conversation, or rather of something better than a report—a dramatic reflection of the position which would be lost in a detailed

account. Would the talk at the theatre have been as impressive as it appears if we could have it reproduced by phonograph? Locke, it is said, once wrote down the actual words of Shaftesbury and some great men of the day, to show them how trivial it looked on paper. The moral was, if I remember rightly, that they ought to talk about the origin of ideas instead of discussing their hands at cards. But I fear that the test, if applied to the very best of talk, would have a depressing effect. The actual words dribbled out at a century's distance would be depressingly flat. The brilliant things, even of the most brilliant talker, are exceptional flashes; they are the few diamonds among a mass of pebbles, and generally want a good deal of polishing before they get moulded into the famous gems which we admire. The actual talk includes all the approximations and the ramblings round about the point. The 'master-bowman,' as Tennyson puts it, may come at last and hit the target in the centre; but even he generally wastes a great many arrows in the process. Then, of course, half the effect of most good talk is dramatic; its success depends not only upon what is said, but upon what is omitted and upon the mental attitude of the moment of

the other players in the game. As Holmes says himself, 'The whole force of conversation depends on how much you can take for granted'—that is, in your hearers. I have no doubt of the excellence of Holmes's talk; but it was, I guess, partly due to the fact that it was part of a spontaneous concert. Talking is, as Holmes said, 'one of the fine arts,' and it is one which requires above all things a harmonious co-operation. The hearers must join themselves, and must also act as an effective sounding-board. They must catch the ball quickly, and return it nimbly, or the best performer will flag.

Holmes found his best co-operators in his famous 'Saturday Club.' He was always referring to it fondly, and Mr. Morse produces various testimonies to its merits. Lowell said that he had never seen equally good society in London. Colonel Higginson observes that Holmes and Lowell were the most brilliant talkers he ever heard, but suggests a qualification of this comparison. They had not, he says, 'the London art of repression,' and monopolised the talk too much. They could, he intimates, overlook the claims of their interlocutors. He once heard Lowell demonstrating to the author of *Uncle*

Tom's Cabin that *Tom Jones* was the best novel ever written; while Holmes was proving to her husband, the divinity professor, that the pulpit was responsible for all the swearing. Dr. and Mrs. Beecher Stowe, it is implied, must have been reduced to ciphers before they could be the passive recipients of such doctrines. In spite of this, I can easily believe that the Club deserved its fame. The 'art of repression,' I fancy, is very often superfluous in London. Conversation in ever-shifting crowds requires stimulation more often than restraint, and it is sometimes as hard to set talk going in the fortuitous concurrence of human atoms at a large party as to start a real exchange of ideas in an excursion train. The best talk that I have ever heard has certainly been in obscure corners, where a few friends meet habitually, and distribute their parts instinctively. A society which included all the best scholars and men of genius within reach of Boston had abundance of the raw material of talk. They might be compared in point of talent even with the men who met Johnson at the 'Turk's Head,' and certainly had as great a variety of interest in men and books. They had, it would seem, fewer jealousies, or, as the sneerer would put it, were readier for

'mutual admiration'; and such admiration, when it has a fair excuse, is the best security for forming the kind of soil in which the flower of talk grows spontaneously.

Talk, said Holmes, is 'to me only spading up the ground for crops of thought.' He was half his time 'interviewing himself' and looking for his own thoughts, 'as a schoolboy turns his pockets inside out to find what is in them.' The *Autocrat* is the outcome of this investigation. It might have been more amusing to watch the actual process; but a reader may be content to get the fine extract. Holmes, as he intimates himself, was his own Boswell. He had a quaint satisfaction in following the career of Johnson, whose age differed by exactly a century from his own, and missed an old companion when he outlived his parallel. It would be absurd to make a comparison, as a Johnson fused with a Boswell would have been a singularly different person. Indeed, the most obvious peculiarity of Holmes's mind is one to which his ponderous predecessor could make no pretension. Johnson went into conversation like a gladiator into the arena; and if Holmes could have met him the pair would have been like a Spanish bull encountered by a dexter-

ous picador. Holmes would have been over his head and behind his back, and stabbing him on the flank with all manner of ingenious analogies, and with squibs and crackers of fancy, instead of meeting the massive charge face to face. To invent an imaginary conversation between the two is altogether beyond my powers, and I can only hope that it is taking place somewhere in Elysium. Holmes's most peculiar excellence is foreshadowed in a passage which Boswell quotes from Barrow's sermons as applicable to Wilkes. 'Facetiousness,' as Barrow says, among other things, 'raiseth admiration as signifying a nimble sagacity of apprehension, a special felicity of invention, a vivacity of spirit and reach of wit more than vulgar; it seeming to argue a rare quickness of parts, that one can fetch in remote conceits applicable; a notable skill that he can dexterously accommodate them to the purpose before him; together with a lively briskness of humour, not apt to damp those sportful flashes of imagination. Where in Aristotle—' but there I had better stop. Barrow probably knew Holmes as pre-existing in one of the ancestors who transmitted to him the power of 'fetching in remote conceits.' The *Autocrat* might suggest a series

of riddles or problems for some future examiner in English literature. Why is controversy like the Hydrostatic Paradox? Why is a poem like a meerschaum? What is the very obvious resemblance between the pupil of the eye and the mind of the bigot? In what respects may truths be properly compared to dice and lies to marbles? Why should a trustworthy friend be like a cheap watch? How does the proper treatment for Guinea-worm illustrate the best mode of treating habitual drunkards? The answers to these and many equally ingenious parallels illustrate Holmes's power of procuring analogies; and show, too, how his talent had been polished in the conversational arena. The commonest weakness of popular writers in the eyes of severe critics is that they resemble barristers addressing dull juries. Such an one feels that he must not simply state a reason, but pound it into a thick head by repetition. When a joke seems to answer, he makes it again and again till the stare of puzzled suspicion that the man may be not quite serious passes into the broad grin of steady conviction that he is actually making a joke. The instrument upon which Holmes had performed, the circle of congenial friends, was, of course, far more responsive.

Still, an after-dinner criticism requires to be played with and flashed in different lights if it is to win the ear of the party. In that act of dexterously manipulating a subtle analogy, playing with it long enough to excite attention, and yet not so long as to bore the intelligent, Holmes had certainly become a master.

Wit of this kind has a close affinity to logic; and Holmes is the man of science playing with a weapon available for more serious purposes. According to himself, he played with it a little too much in his professional capacity. A man who could say that the 'smallest fevers would be thankfully received' had not the excessive gravity which we desire in our medical advisers. In some hands the danger would be rather that the wit would be too heavily weighted with the logic. Holmes succeeded in making his logic sparkle and play over the surface of his sentiment; and achieved the feat happily described in the saying of his friend, Thomas Appleton—famous for many good sayings—that he had 'put the electricity of the climate into words.' The force which may crush a fallacy can also coruscate like mild summer lightning. This logical tendency makes a characteristic difference between Holmes and Charles

Lamb, the most obvious parallel to him in our own language. Holmes, as became a quick logician, was an unequivocal lover of clearness and common sense. He may play with an extravagance, as in the case of Boston, but he is anxious always to show that he sees its extravagance. Lamb loves the quaint and grotesque for its own sake; falls in love with his prejudices; delights in yielding to them unreservedly, and caressing them and flouting the reasonable matter-of-fact person, the solid Scot who demonstrates that an absurdity is absurd. He may be quite reasonable at bottom, but he will not condescend to interpret his meaning to the hopelessly commonplace. So, for example, he dilates upon his 'imperfect sympathy' with the Jews. He has, 'in the abstract, no disrespect for them. They are a piece of stubborn antiquity compared with which Stonehenge is in its nonage.' But, he adds, 'old prejudices cling about me. I cannot shake off the old story of Hugh of Lincoln.' Holmes meets some Jews 'at the pantomime' and remembers the same legend :—

> Up came their murderous deeds of old,
> The grisly story Chaucer told;
> And many an ugly tale beside,
> Of children caught and crucified.

But Holmes makes this merely a pretext for a reproach to narrow prejudices, and for pointing out the superlative claims of the race upon the regard of Christians. No doubt Lamb would have been heartily pleased with Holmes's application of the story; but he is content to allow his readers to find out for themselves that he is not an embodiment of stupid antipathies. This is, perhaps, to say that Lamb's humour was more thoroughly ingrained in his character; and the effect appears in their literary tastes. Lamb delights in the quaintness and mysticism of the seventeenth century; likes to lose himself with Sir Thomas Browne in an *O Altitudo!* and so loves the splendid audacities of the old dramatists that he frequently loves even their extravagance. Holmes, on the other hand, though born when Lamb was thirty-five, adheres to the safe tradition against which Lamb and his friends had revolted. His real affinities are with the wits from Addison to Goldsmith, the believers in reason and common-sense, who had sharpened their brains, as he had done, in small social gatherings. He liked to call the hotel where his club met after Will's Coffeehouse sacred to Dryden; and he seems to have regarded Emerson and his disciples much

as his English predecessors looked upon the 'enthusiasts' of their day. One of his most characteristic letters is a very courteous reply, written in 1846, to a remonstrance from Lowell, who had complained that he did not attack war and slavery in his poems. He does not differ from Lowell in his judgment of those evils; but he must follow his natural bent, and was glad to leave these burning problems to more eloquent advocates. It is quite clear, in fact, that his natural predisposition made believers in what we call 'fads' uncongenial. He saw their absurdities, their one-sided extravagances, and their appeals to a kind of inspired authority from the common-sense point of view. Their vehemence and their blindness to the practical shocked his taste and kept him for the time at arm's-length. And so, in spite of his thorough patriotism, he was, in some directions, a conservative and even an aristocrat. He was for 'Americanising' religion —for that meant making religion reasonable; but not for Americanising literature, for the phrase had been used to mean vulgarising. 'I go politically for equality,' says he, 'and socially for *the* quality.' He wished, in short, to preserve the traditions of refinement and harmony, suavity

and tact, which can, as he held, only be produced in two or three generations lifted above squalor and the hardening influences of coarse manual labour. In literature, therefore, he was naturally a purist; he was simply disgusted when it was proposed to make a literary declaration of independence by introducing broad jokes in slang suited to a western backwood-man. He shuddered at the thought of a possible President of the Republic saying 'häow' instead of 'what,' or 'urritation' for irritation. Some lovely woman, he hopes, will playfully withdraw the knife which the great man is about to use as a fork, or sacrifice herself by imitating his use of the implement —'how much harder than to plunge it into her bosom like Lucretia!' The true canons of good literature, as of good behaviour, are founded upon the eternal laws of good sense and good feeling: and therefore a revolt against them is not the way to independence, but to degeneration. Holmes, of course, maintained that refinement was compatible with democracy, and that a thorough American might also be the most polished of gentlemen. But he had the keenest contempt for the confusion of mere eccentricity with originality, or the theory that man gains real self-

respect by forgetting his manners. When the Civil War broke out, Holmes most heartily adopted the patriotic view of the situation, and spoke, too, in the language of a thorough political republican. He used the familiar shibboleth without hesitation. His old sympathy with abolitionists had been tempered by his fear that their excessive devotion to a good cause might, as he told Lowell, precipitate a frightful future of 'war and bloodshed.' Here the sympathy could have full play, and the enthusiasm be at once with the man of reason and common-sense.

Whether, as Holmes hoped, democracy will prove to be the reign of reason and of true refinement of respect for man as man, and also of respect for the traditional culture, is not a question to be asked here. The shorter and more answerable problem concerns his own character. Holmes shocked the orthodox by some of his theories: and perhaps, if he had fully perceived or uttered some of their consequences he would have shocked them more. He might have been respected: but to the ordinary reader he would have appeared as a scoffer, or at least as a blast from the nipping north-east air, blighting the

fairest flowers of old tradition. One can perhaps fancy Holmes under other surroundings, producing a book not unlike *Candide*, incomparably witty, but not exactly conciliatory to the other side. But with all his power of ridicule Holmes had not a touch of the satirist about him. He shrinks from painting even his enemies in too black colours. He can denounce bigotry, but he always prefers to point out that the bigot in theory may be the kindliest of men in practice. In one of his early bits of pure fun, he tells how his servant was thrown into a fit by reading some of his merry lines :—

> Ten days and nights with sleepless eye
> I watched that wretched man;
> Since then I never dare to write
> As funny as I can.

Certainly he never wrote as sharply as it is abundantly plain that he could. He always remembered that the other person was a human being. It was very shocking to burn the witches, but he could not find it in his heart to sentence the burner to his own flames.

If Holmes, that is, had revolted from his early teachers he had never become bitter. This was, perhaps, because he never grew to manhood,

He requests all but youthful readers to abstain from one of his papers, and explains that 'youthful' includes some 'from the age of twelve to that of four-score years and ten.' Youth is 'something in the soul which has no more to do with the colour of the hair than the vein of gold in a rock has to do with the grass a thousand feet above it.' No one has ever insisted upon that text so emphatically and persistently. The 'poems of the class of 1829' have no doubt been surpassed in the highest qualities by some autobiographical series that might be mentioned, but their merits as occasional verse have an almost unique personal interest. Every year from 1851 till 1889 sees the laureate of the old set of friends proclaiming—as long as it can be done by even a poetical fiction—that they are still 'boys,' and when even the fiction would be too sad, still claiming undying youth for the old affection. So, as he says in 1884, after setting forth a characteristic analogy :—

> So, link by link, our friendships part
> To loosen, break, and fall,
> A narrowing zone ; the loving heart
> Lives changeless through them all.

Although when Lamb wrote his pathetic *Old*

Familiar Faces, bewailing the loss of school-friends, he was a little over twenty, his mood seems appropriate to one who, in the decline of life, feels his solitude to be almost unbearable. Humour which reveals the seamy side of life generally goes with a melancholy temperament, and Lamb's sweetness is generally toned by the sadness, due both to circumstance and to disposition. It is Holmes's special peculiarity that the childish buoyancy remains almost to the end, unbroken and irrepressible. He could hardly indeed have sympathised with the doctrine that heaven lies about us in our infancy, for we cherish that—illusion is it or faith? when we are forced to admit that we can only see the light of common day. Holmes never seems to have lost the early buoyancy—only to have acquired new toys; even physiology, which he studied seriously enough, and which is not generally regarded as amusing, supplies him with intellectual playthings, quaint fancies, and remote analogies to be tossed about like balls by a skilful juggler. The early poems, written in the pure extravagance of boyish fun, like the *Spectre Pig* and *The Mysterious Visitor*, show characteristics which may be overlaid but are never obliterated. I don't know

that any of his poems are more thoroughly himself than the early lines on a portrait:—

> That thing thou fondly deem'st a nose,
> Unsightly though it be,—
> In spite of all the world's cold scorn,
> It may be much to thee.

The inimitable *One-Horse Shay* was written when he was near fifty, and the *Broomstick Train*, almost equally full of fun, when he was over eighty, and had sorrows enough to quench most men's last sparkles of vivacity. No human being ever fought more gallantly with the old enemy who defeats us all in the end.

Holmes's boyishness appears in his quaint love of athletic sports, more eccentric in America when he wrote than it seems to be at present; his love of boxing and rowing and walking. We can almost believe the Autocrat when he says that he was tempted to put on the gloves with the 'Benicia Boy,' though that hero was of twice his weight and half his age. His exuberant feelings betray him into some bacchanalian lyrics, for which he half apologises. He goes back in spirit to the jovial old British squires who once possessed his punch-bowl—

I tell you there was generous warmth in good old
English cheer,
I tell you 'twas a pleasant thought to bring its symbol
here!
'Tis but the fool that loves excess; hast thou a drunken
soul,
The fault is in thy shallow brain, not in my silver
bowl.

This, indeed, may remind us that the everlasting 'boy' in Holmes is not to be confounded with the young of the human species as known to us by actual experience. The real boy is sometimes a brute, who loves boxing and the punch-bowl after the manner of brutes. Holmes's boyishness means the actual possession of such qualities as are attributed to boys—rashly sometimes—by loving mothers; the perfect simplicity, the confiding trustfulness of a nature which has not been soured into cynicism; and the confident assumption that their own happiness implies the general goodness of all their fellow-creatures. Holmes's early revolt against Calvinism had left to him, as I have said, the belief that a Calvinist was a really good man with an offensive dogma floating on the surface of his mind. His heretical outbursts might be taken in good part by the judicious, because they remind even the orthodox

not so much of the assaults of a determined enemy as of the naïve irreverence of a child who expresses in pure simplicity his view of some accepted dogma. He may have hit upon a really grave objection, but it implies no personal antipathies. This, as it requires no wizard to say, is the secret of the method by which Holmes unlocked the doors of so many hearts. The tenderness and simplicity combined were irresistible passports to admittance; even his logic appeared in the form of a dazzling display of wit; and the pathos touches us because it is presented without the slightest tinge of affectation. Nobody can be at once more feeling and more free from sentimentalism. His compliments, always delicately turned and sometimes exquisite, often remind me of Boswell's portrait of Garrick 'playing round' Johnson with a 'fond vivacity,' and looking up in his face with a lively archness, till the old gentleman was warmed into 'gentle complacency.' If Garrick was presumably the better actor, he could not have been more dexterous in administering praise. But I need not try to expound what every one perceives who has read his poems, such especially as the famous *Last Leaf* and *Dorothy Q.*, and the *Chambered Nautilus*. The last of these,

I humbly confess, does not quite touch me as it should, because it seems too ingenious. Like Blanco White's famous sonnet, it rather tempts me, at least, to think what reply I could make to the argument. But the *Last Leaf* might be made into the text of all that I wish to say. The exquisite pathos of the verse about the mossy marbles linked to the fun of the irresistible though sinful 'grin' is the typical instance of Holmes's special combination of qualities. He is one of the writers who are destined to live long—longer, it may be, than some of greater intellectual force and higher imagination, because he succeeds so admirably in flavouring the milk of human kindness with an element which is not acid, and yet gets rid of the mawkishness which sometimes makes good morality terribly insipid. This biography, in spite of the scantiness of material, falls in at every point with the impression derived from the books, and leaves us with the satisfactory conviction that we have no errata to correct in our previous judgment.

LIFE OF TENNYSON

EVERY one, I presume, has read the deeply interesting volumes in which Lord Tennyson has paid most appropriate homage to the memory of his father; and the life has probably suggested to most of us some comments upon the familiar poetry. A remark reported by Tennyson's old friend, Jowett, is a useful warning against over-ambitious attempts in that direction. 'There was,' said Tennyson, 'one intellectual process in the world of which he could not even entertain an apprehension—that was' (the process which created) 'the plays of Shakespeare.' If Tennyson could not imagine the Shakespearean intellect, it is impossible for people who are not poets even to guess at the Tennysonian. The most obvious of his merits is the most tantalising to a would-be explainer. It is especially difficult, as he observes, and as other people have observed before him, to be 'at once commonplace and poetical'; to find the one incomparable and magical phrase for the

thought which has been trying to get itself uttered for centuries. There are interesting accounts in these volumes of the way in which some of Tennyson's most perfect passages sprang from accidental phrases, 'rolled about' in his mind; but phrases may roll about in some minds for a very long time to very little purpose. Leave a phrase to simmer in your memory; brood over it, let it crystallize into form in your mind, and the feat will be done. It will, that is, if your mind is Tennysonian; but there is the mystery. One trivial example comes home to the Alpine traveller. He has seen and tried for years to tell how he is impressed by his beloved scenery, and annoyed by his own bungling whenever he has tried to get beyond arithmetical statements of hard geographical facts. And then Tennyson, who was never in his life more than 7000 feet above the sea, just glances at the Monte Rosa from the cathedral at Milan, and in a four-line stanza gives the whole spirit of the scene to perfection. It does not seem fair, but if justice supposes an equal distribution of abilities, the world is not remarkable for fairness. Tennyson's superlative skill in this art is too conspicuous and too universally acknowledged to justify more than a passing recognition of an undeniable truth. And,

perhaps, criticism of really great and familiar poetry should be mainly reserved for the select few who may without arrogance claim to be more or less of the same spiritual order. One may, however, say something upon various points suggested by this biography, and especially as to the audience which first listened to the new poetical revelation.

I will begin with a few words as to my own experience in regard to that matter. Tennyson had already made his mark when I was a schoolboy; and when I was at college all youths who professed a literary turn knew the earlier poems by heart. Ebullient Byronism was a thing of the past. There was no longer any need for the missionary zeal which had taken Cambridge men of an earlier generation to propagate the worship of Shelley at Oxford. 'Chatter' about that luminary was already becoming commonplace; a mere repetition of accepted poetical orthodoxy. Admiration of Browning, though it was distinctly beginning, implied a certain claim to esoteric appreciation. But Tennyson's fame was established, and yet had not lost the full bloom of novelty. It was delightful to catch a young man coming up from the country and indoctrinate him by spouting *Locksley Hall* and the *Lotus Eaters*. *In Memoriam* had just

appeared when I was a freshman—Tennyson became Poet Laureate in my first term—and *Maud* came out the year after I had graduated. Any one who cares to know by contemporary evidence how Tennyson's poetry affected the young men of that period may turn to the essays of George Brimley, a man of fine taste, who died prematurely, and who, as librarian of Trinity, gave utterance to the correct sentiment of Tennyson's old college. Tennyson, he declares, is doing for us of the nineteenth century what Shakespeare and Chaucer did for the England of their own days. Brimley spoke for the civilised part of University society: Tennyson's friends, Thompson (afterwards master) and W. G. Clark, the editor of Shakespeare, were conspicuous in that exalted region; and the younger generation all accepted the Tennysonian faith as that becoming enlightened persons. I only followed my companions when I tacitly assumed that 'poet' was a phrase equivalent to 'Tennyson.' The enthusiasm no doubt was partly obligatory; to repudiate it would have been to write oneself down an ass; but it was also warm and spontaneous. For that one owes a debt of gratitude to the poet not easily to be estimated. It is a blessing to share an enthusiasm, and I hope,

rather than believe, that modern undergraduates have some equally wholesome stimulus of the kind. I do not think that we of the older generation have changed our estimate of Tennyson's merits; even though our 'enthusiasm' may have subsided into a more temperate warmth of approval. I mean, however, our estimate of the old poems. One could love them without putting the later works on the same level. Some readers were sensible of a considerable difficulty in that matter. The first series of *Idylls of the King* appeared in 1859. This volume at once extended Tennyson's popularity beyond all previous limits. Ten thousand copies were sold in the first week; hundreds went off monthly; Tennyson made such a success in the merely bookselling sense as to rival Scott, Macaulay, and Dickens. The success, too, was as marked if judged by some higher tests. Thackeray wrote in 'a rapture of gratitude' to acknowledge the greatest delight that had ever come to him since he was a young man. The Duke of Argyll reported that even Macaulay had been conquered, and predicted, truly enough, that many would appreciate the new poems who had failed to appreciate the old. Mr. Gladstone welcomed the *Idylls* in the *Quarterly*, and Jowett

wrote as enthusiastically as Thackeray. These judgments, too, are still repeated, and Mr. Stopford Brooke's recent volume upon Tennyson contains a long commentary, which, if more discriminative, is still cordially reverential. I have conscientiously tried to enlighten myself by studying it, but even a knowledge that one ought to be enthusiastic is a different thing from enthusiasm. Not to recognise the wonderful literary skill and the exceeding beauty of many passages would, of course, imply more stupidity than any one would willingly admit; but I am afraid that from the publication of the *Idylls* I had to admit that I was not quite of the inner circle of true worshippers. I am glad to shelter myself to some extent behind higher authorities. Edward Fitz-Gerald confessed when the *Holy Grail* appeared (in 1870) that he was inclined to prefer the old *Lady of Shalott* method of dealing with the Round Table to the elaborated epic poem. He supposed that a bit must be wanting in the map of his brain, but anyhow, while feeling 'how pure, noble, and holy' the work was, he passed on to where the old Lincolnshire farmer drew tears to his eyes. He got back to 'substantial rough-spun nature,' and felt that the 'old brute' was 'a more pathetic

phenomenon' than the Knights of the Round Table. This is only, as he explains, one of 'old Fitz's crotchets' (and it may be said incidentally that FitzGerald's letters, crotchety or 'not,' are among the best things in these volumes). Mr. Ruskin, on the appearance of the first *Idylls*, puts virtually the same point in more formal language. He thinks that 'the true task of the modern poet' should be to 'give the intense, masterful, and unerring transcript of an actuality.' He is not sure, he confesses, that he does not 'feel the art and finish in these poems a little more than he likes to feel it.' Upon this Lord Tennyson makes an interesting remark. The *Idylls*, he tells us, were not carefully elaborated. '"Guinevere" and "Elaine" were each written in a few weeks, and hardly corrected at all.' The poet, of course, had been long brooding over them; and many phrases had come to him from accidental suggestions, and gone through a slow incubation; but the actual execution was rapid. This, however, does not quite meet the criticism. It is not a question, I fancy, of the elaboration of the language, but of the vividness and spontaneity of the thought to be elaborated. The art becomes obvious, because Tennyson seems not so much to

be inspired by an overmastering idea as to be looking about for appropriate images to express certain ethical and religious sentiments. He has obviously seen the Northern farmer with his own eyes; he has only contrived his knights, who never seem to me to be clothed in real flesh and blood. Jowett remarks that the 'allegory in the distance greatly strengthens, also elevates, the meaning of the poem.' To me, I humbly confess, 'allegory,' rightly or wrongly, means nuisance. The 'meaning' which it sticks on to a poem is precisely what the poem cannot properly 'mean.' The old *Morte d'Arthur*, as it appeared with the charming old setting, was one of the poems which we all knew by heart. One of the charms was surely that the behaviour of the persons was delightfully illogical and absurd. Rather, perhaps, it took one to the world in which true logic demands illogical behaviour. Things take place there according to a law of their own, which is the more attractive just because it is preposterous and apparently arbitrary. When Sir Bedivere throws Excalibur into the lake, the whole proceeding is, as indeed Sir Bedivere very properly perceives and points out, contrary to all commonsense. His reluctance gives us warning that we

have got into the world governed by phantastic laws. Throwing a sword into a lake does not, within ordinary experience, produce a barge occupied by three queens with crowns of gold; just as shooting an albatross does not, as a rule, produce a dead calm and death of a ship's crew by thirst. But though things of dreamland follow laws of their own, even dreamland has laws, and they ought to be observed when once you get there. The 'Ancient Mariner' was ridden by a nightmare, and all things happened to him according to the genuine laws of the nightmare world. Arthur's Round Table was a dream of the mediæval imagination, and the historian of its adventures should frankly put himself in the corresponding attitude of mind. It lends itself admirably to represent the ideals which were in the minds of the dreamer, and therefore unconsciously determined the constitution of the imaginary world. But when the personages, instead of obeying the laws of their own world, are converted into allegory, they lose their dream reality without gaining the reality of ordinary life. The arbitrariness especially ceases to be delightful when we suspect that the real creatures of the fancy have become the puppets of a judicious moralist.

The question, What is the meaning? throws one's mind out of gear. When Sir Bedivere made his second appearance somebody asked Tennyson whether the three queens were not Faith, Hope, and Charity. The poet replied that they were, and that they were not. They might be the Virtues or they might be the Three Graces. There was, he said, an 'allegorical, or perhaps rather a parabolic, drift,' in the poem; but he added there was not a single fact or incident in the *Idylls* which might not be explained without any mystery or allegory whatever. This explanation may be very satisfactory to some readers, and if they are satisfied, their state is the more gracious; but I humbly confess that so soon as genuine inhabitants of Fairyland can be interpreted as three virtues or three graces, they cease to fascinate me. In the *Holy Grail* the mystical purpose is most distinctly avowed. We are told to learn what it means by studying the visions of Sir Percival, and his 'subsequent fall and nineteenth century temptations.' The result of my study is that the visions are turned into waking shams, and leave a residuum of edifying sermon. The intrusion of the nineteenth century is simply disenchantment. If I want to be moral, I should get much more

instruction out of *Mme. Bovary* or some other 'masterful transcript of actuality' than out of Tristram and Iseult, and if I want to be romantic, the likeness of King Arthur to the Prince Consort takes all the vigour out of the prehistoric personage. The Prince Consort, no doubt, deserved Tennyson's profound respect; but when we find him masquerading among the Knights of the Round Table, his admirable propriety of behaviour looks painfully like insipidity and incapacity for his position.

This line of criticism is, of course, very obvious; and, I admit, may be simply a proof of the critic's unsuitability. I desire simply to state the historical fact that the publication of the *Idylls* marks the point at which some disciples were sensible of a partial refrigeration of their zeal. The old Tennysonian power was not extinct; many of the poems up to the last had all the old exquisite charm, and the older poetry never lost it. But from this time a certain class of admirers —perhaps the duller class—felt that they dwelt in the outer court, and that they could not enter the inmost shrine with befitting reverence. There was not, I must add, in my case at least, any objection to the combination, as it is called, of

philosophy with poetry. 'Your poetry,' as Jowett said to Tennyson, 'has an element of philosophy more to be considered than any regular philosophy in England.' 'It is,' he adds, 'almost too much impregnated with philosophy,' although this again 'will be to some minds its greatest charm.' Tennyson himself was amused by discovering that he had been talking Hegelianism without knowing it. The fact is, I take it, that poetry in a mind of great general power, not only may be, but cannot help being, philosophy. Philosophy itself, it may be plausibly urged, is in reality nothing but poetry expressed by the cumbrous methods of dialectical formulæ. It labours painfully to put together ostensible reasons for the truth of the conceptions of life and the world which are directly presented in the poetic imagery. Tennyson's philosophy would have been present, though not consciously indicated, if he had simply recast the Arthurian legends in the spirit of the original creators. Nor will I argue that dislike to allegory is anything better than a prosaic prejudice, or, perhaps, an application of some pretentious æsthetic canon. Perhaps, indeed, the allegorical form was not so much the stumbling-block as the philosophical or ethical system itself which was

meant to be adumbrated. Or rather, for that, I think, is the true account, we who fell off disliked a philosophy which required to be insinuated through an allegorical clothing. We were going through an intellectual crisis; and if we exaggerated its importance, Tennyson at least, as many other utterances prove, and as his memoirs show most convincingly, was equally impressed by the greatness of the issues. But for that reason, we (I repeat that by 'we' I only mean the wicked) wanted something more downright and dogmatic. A religious philosophy which hides itself behind mythical figures and vague personifications of abstract qualities; which can only be shadowed forth and insinuated through a rehabilitated romance, seemed inadequate and even effeminate. We fancied that if it ventured into broad daylight it would turn out to be mere commonplace disguised or made of moonshine and flimsy sentimentalisms. Or, possibly, we were not distinctly aware that there really was any mystical meaning at all, and simply felt that when such vital questions were being raised, we could not be really interested in this dim poetic land of unsubstantial shadows. When, a little later, we began to know what Omar Khàyyàm had said some eight centuries

before, we felt the power of a direct and intensely powerful utterance of one mode of treating the eternal problem.

All this, it may be replied, is to explain that a certain class of young men were partially alienated from Tennyson's poetry because they did not like his philosophy; which is a proof that they were æsthetically dull and philosophically grovelling. I will not dispute the inference; I think, indeed, that there is much to be said for it; and as I have admitted my tendencies that way, I am obviously disqualified from speaking as an impartial judge. I only wish to urge, by way of extenuation at any rate, that we were still accessible to other Tennysonian influences, and, indeed, to poems in which his doctrine finds a more direct utterance. I love *In Memoriam*, and should be sorry if I were forced to admit that I could not understand the true secret of its extraordinary beauty. Professor Sidgwick contributes to this volume a most interesting account of its influence upon him. For certain reasons, I could not adopt all that he says, and my intellectual dissent from Tennyson begins, I may say, at an earlier stage; but I decline to admit that I am for that reason incapable of feeling the emotional power. Therefore, without

attempting to argue the æsthetical canons, I return to the purely historical question suggested by these volumes. Froude, in a letter to the author, says that in his estimate, Tennyson stands 'far away, by the side of Shakespeare, above all other English poets, with this relative superiority even to Shakespeare, that he speaks the thoughts and speaks to the perplexities and misgivings of his own age.' Froude adds characteristically that Tennyson came before the world had become inflated 'with the vanity of progress, and there was still an atmosphere in which such a soul could grow. There will be no such others for many a long age.' It is rash, I think, to prophesy about 'long ages,' but Froude is at any rate a good witness as to the facts. Froude had known better than most people the doubts and perplexities by which Tennyson's contemporaries were distracted; and though Froude's own view remains rather a mystery, the impression made upon a man so alive to many sides of modern thought is no small proof of Tennyson's power. Now the memoirs ought to show us how Tennyson was prepared for the office of prophet. It has become common, as Mr. Palgrave remarks in his reminiscences, to treat of a poet as though he were 'evolved by a natural

law'; and he gives an amusing instance in Taine's *à priori* speculations as to the evolution of Tennyson. Tennyson, as Taine suggested in a conversation, must have been brought up in luxury, and 'surrounded with things of costly beauty.' Mr. Palgrave was able to upset this theory, so far as concerned Tennyson's personal history. There is, of course, one absolute limit to any such speculation. No human being can presume to guess what are the conditions which determine the innate qualities of a man of genius. No one can say why such a plant, or a whole family of such plants, should have suddenly sprung up in a Lincolnshire vicarage, or why, a few years after, a similar phenomenon should have presented itself at Haworth. One can only ask how far the genius was influenced by its 'environment'? In both cases it might seem at first sight to be most unfavourable. The Brontës had an even less congenial atmosphere in Yorkshire than the Tennysons among the rough farmers of Lincolnshire. And yet in both cases there is this much similarity in the result, that, as the Brontës became even fanatical admirers of the cross-grained, hard-fisted Yorkshireman, Tennyson acquired at least a keen imaginative sympathy with

the race of 'Northern farmers.' It would be as easy as absurd to deduce from these instances a general theory about the advantage of a bracing atmosphere for sensitive plants. In the case of Tennyson it must be admitted that the scantiness of details in the earlier parts of the memoir is rather tantalising. When Tennyson had become famous, materials of course became abundant, and Lord Tennyson tells us that he has had to make selections from forty thousand letters. For the early years, in which the mind and character were being formed, he had had little beyond a few recollections of his parents' talk. One would gladly know more of the crusty old grandfather who disinherited his eldest son; and of the stalwart son himself, six feet two in height, famous for social geniality and yet given to fits of despondency, and capable of being something of a tyrant in his family. His soul, we are told, was 'daily racked by bitter fancies, and tossed about by stormy troubles.' He had strange adventures in Russia and on the Continent. From the age of eleven the son had this father for his sole instructor, and must have profited, and also, one guesses, have suffered from the 'dominating force' of the paternal intellect. Then there is only a glimpse

of the charming aunt, who would 'weep for hours' over the infinite goodness of God. He had damned most of her friends, and 'picked out for eternal salvation,' her who was 'no better than her neighbours.' One would like again to know more even of the cook, who declared that if you 'raäked out hell with a smaäll tooth coämb' you wouldn't find the likes of her master and mistress. Was this characteristic of the cook or of her employers? It might conceivably be interpreted as confirming a later statement that Tennyson's mother, being an angel, was undiscoverable in the lower regions, and she appears to have been in fact a most charming old lady, with a strong sense of humour. There are hints enough here for a hypothetical biography, with any number of remarks about 'heredity' and 'environment.' All that can be safely said is that Tennyson was obviously a born poet, writing verses of unmistakable promise at the age of fourteen and fifteen; even getting, at the age of seventeen, £20 from a singularly discriminative country bookseller for the volume (written with his brother); and accumulating at least the materials for other poems, including the 'Ode to Memory,' which, we are told, he considered to be one of the best among his 'very early and

peculiarly concentrated Nature poems.' Personally, I have always been grateful to it for one of those life-giving touches which went far to reveal or justify for me the charm of fen scenery. Whatever the influences, Tennyson came up to Cambridge as a poet, and even, it seems, as a man already set aside for poetry. At Cambridge, at any rate, he was contented to stand aside from the ordinary competitions. Like other men of poetical genius, he felt little respect for the regular studies of the place; and melodiously complained that the authorities 'taught us nothing, feeding not the heart.' The heart, indeed, cannot be fed upon Newton's *Principia*. There might, I think, be some reply to the charge of 'lethargy' made against the University of that time: the place was really waking up under the influence (among others) of Julius Hare and Thirlwall and Whewell; but, undoubtedly, the influence of his own contemporaries was the really important matter for Tennyson. There may be, in many ways, better official teaching now; but the existing generation must be congratulated if it includes any large admixture of young men so keenly interested in intellectual pursuits as were Tennyson's special circle. The Union had just ceased to be thrilled

by the eloquence of Charles Austin and Macaulay and Praed, and their rivals who supplied recruits to the 'philosophical Radicals,' and sought glory in the Reform Bill agitation. Charles Buller, the most beloved by his friends the Radicals, left college soon after Tennyson came up; Maurice, who had already founded the 'apostles,' with Sterling, the most attractive of men, represented the other school of Liberalism, which regarded Coleridge as its oracle. Among Tennyson's intimates and warm friends in later life were such men as Spedding, and Monckton Milnes, and Trench, and many others keenly interested, at least, in the literature of to-day. Edward FitzGerald, though a contemporary, was not as yet known to Tennyson; but Lord Houghton seems to have been fully justified in saying that the Cambridge of those days could boast a body of young men such as had been rarely surpassed in promise. Chief among them, in Tennyson's opinion, and in that of many good judges, was Arthur Hallam. Whatever might be the dreariness of the lecture-room, a young man of genius could have no reason to complain that his lot was cast in barren places. Tennyson in later years always looked back with affection to those 'dawn-golden times'; and,

indeed, his memory inspired phrases too familiar for more than a passing allusion. To students of the might-have-been, it might be tempting to ask what would have happened if Tennyson had gone to Oxford and come under the influence of Newman and Hurrell Froude. The Dean of Westminster tells us how, when he first met Tennyson among his intimates, in 1841-2, he was startled by their indifference to the Tractarian Controversy, and to the questions which interested the disciples of Arnold. Would an Oxford-bred Tennyson have written another *Christian Year*, or achieved that poem which Clough never succeeded in writing?

Anyhow, the retrospective view of Tennyson's college life might suggest some melancholy reflections. Death cut short some promising careers; some, though they did good work, failed to make a public mark: they have left an impression upon their personal friends, but an impression of which even the tradition will expire in the next generation; and others, perhaps for want of some quality of mind or character, eventually dropped behind the real leaders of the time, and compounded with the commonplace world. Why did not Tennyson fall to the rear? Such a catastrophe must at one

time have seemed not improbable to an outside observer. His friends, indeed, seem to have fully recognised his abilities. He was, briefly, one of the 'mighty of the earth,' said Blakesley. 'He was,' says Fanny Kemble, whose brother John was a college friend, 'the great hero of the day.' His tall, powerful figure, his 'Shakespearian' head, finely poised, 'crowned with dark, wavy hair,' made him look the character of the 'coming poet' as well as could be desired by a painter. The striking point about him, then as afterwards, was the 'union of strength with refinement.' And yet one imagines that the college dons, the 'lion-like' Whewell, for example, also conspicuous for physical as well as intellectual prowess, must have shaken their heads when Tennyson not only declined to enter the Senate House competitions, but apparently decided to become a mere looker-on at life, and passed years in a quiet Bohemian company; smoking pipes at intervals with Carlyle and joining friends at the Cock; but mainly vegetating in the country with no very obvious prospects, and apparently surrendering his mind a little too unreservedly to a 'wise passiveness,' though he might be slowly secreting a few exquisite poems.

That, no doubt, represents one aspect of Tenny-

son. Mr. Lecky remarks that 'nature evidently intended him for the life of the quietest and most secluded of country gentlemen, for a life spent among books and flowers and a few intimate friends,' sheltered from all outside shocks. And at the period to which the recollection refers (late in the 'sixties) this was an obvious, though, as Mr. Lecky of course recognises, very far indeed from an exhaustive, judgment. The house at Farringford, the Mecca of many future generations of Tennysonians, looks as if it had been secreted, like the shell of a mollusc, by the nature of the occupant. The sweet English scenery, which no one ever painted so well, and the sea, which he loved like a true Englishman, show themselves through the belt of wood, calculated to keep the profane vulgar at a distance. It seemed a providential *habitat* for a man so very open to even petty irritations. 'A flea will annoy me,' as he said to Tyndall; 'a fleabite will spread a square inch over the surface of my skin. . . . I *am* thin-skinned, and I take no pains to hide it.' And, indeed, though the fact is fully admitted, it is perhaps less conspicuous in these volumes than it was to casual observers. They were apt to carry away the impression that Tennyson must spend an unreasonably

large part of his time in fretting over the wounds made by trumpery critics. The absolute simplicity of the man, indeed, which was equally obvious, suggested pity instead of contempt for what must be regarded as an infirmity. No poet since Pope was so sensitive to the assaults of Grub Street; though happily he was altogether incapable of condescending to Pope's miserable methods of retort. It is, however, easy to understand the view which commended itself to Taine. His theory was that Tennyson was a kind of refined epicurean; a man lapping himself in British comfort against all disagreeable sights and painful truths; averting his eyes as much as possible from harsh contrasts and harrowing doubts; and enveloped in a panoply made from the soothing creeds of political and religious opportunists, with only just enough of the light of reason filtered through a screen of tradition to pass for being at once liberal and respectable. Though Taine had to give up his theory as to Tennyson's personal environment, he still draws a picture of English country life as seen from the railway—its well-ordered parks and neat country houses embowered in well-ordered gardens—and contrasts it with the stimulating, though rough realities of Parisian life, among which his

favourite De Musset penetrated the true secret of life. Taine naturally prefers De Musset, and his criticism, though it is obviously from a partial outsider, hits off one view which cannot be overlooked. Matthew Arnold, as I have observed elsewhere, introduces the 'great, broad-shouldered genial Englishman' of the 'Princess' as a type of British 'Philistinism,' and intimates his opinion that the creator is too much in sympathy with the type.

It is equally true that no lover of Tennyson's poetry could admit Taine's scornful account of the *In Memoriam* as the mourning of a correct gentleman, wiping away his tears with a cambric pocket-handkerchief. I can subscribe, on the contrary, without hesitation, to the commonplace British opinion that no poet has ever shown such depths of tenderness or such skill in interweaving the most delicate painting of nature with the utterance of profound emotion. And this brings us back to the biographical problem. Over twenty years intervened between Tennyson's departure from Cambridge and the settlement in Farringford. Here again, through no fault of Lord Tennyson, we feel the want of a few more documents. No doubt a reader may be content with what is expressed or can be inferred from the poetry. Yet

the matter-of-fact personal history, if it could have been told, would surely have had a deep interest. In the first place, one would like to know, if a purely prosaic person, something about the bare pounds, shillings, and pence. Tennyson, as we discover from a remark of Carlyle's, inherited a 'small annuity on his father's decease' (1831), and chose to 'club with his mother and sisters,' and so to 'live unpromoted and write poems.' This may be all very well for a bachelor; and we are glad to discover that from 1850 his copyrights were producing five hundred pounds a year, which, considering the small bulk of his publications, shows that he was doing remarkably well for a poet. In 1845, however, he had still been in need of a pension; and the smallness of his income was of serious importance. He had met his future wife in 1836; he had become engaged to her apparently in 1837, and felt the need of making a livelihood. It was from the vagueness of his expectations in that direction that the correspondence between him and Miss Sellwood was forbidden in 1840, and they apparently did not meet again for ten years. Meanwhile all his independent property was lost about 1844, together with part of his brothers' and sisters', in an unfortunate speculation, and

distress caused 'real hardship,' and even an attack of illness. He must, therefore, have gone through a period of trial, affecting not only his pocket, but his hopes of domestic happiness, of which one would have liked to know a little more. That he took his troubles bravely, whatever they may have been, is proved by his literary history. Whatever else he did, he never condescended to lower his aims or the perfection of his workmanship. He allowed his poetry to ripen in his mind, as though he had been in possession of Taine's hypothetical luxuries; and, it would seem, he kept his feelings, whatever they may have been, to himself. His extreme sensibility led him to seek for the utmost possible perfection; not to court immediate popularity. The years of comparative non-recognition must have been trying, and the relative slightness of the personal record of these twenty years is the more regrettable. Fuller materials, had they been accessible, must have brought out more distinctly the real strength which lay beneath the morbidly sensitive outside. His 'sensitiveness,' as Mr. Lecky observes, 'seemed to me,' as it did to others, curiously out of harmony with 'his large, powerful frame.' Whether there is any real incompatibility between athletic vigour and

delicacy of nervous organisation is a problem which I must leave to physiologists. Another instance of the same combination may be found, for example, in Hawthorne; and, I dare say, in plenty of other instances. Generally speaking, we are inclined, with whatever reason, to anticipate from an athletic giant more of the rollicking vigour of a Christopher North than of the exquisite workmanship which makes 'jewels five words long'—the power, as Johnson put it, of hewing a colossus from a rock, not of carving figures on cherry-stones. Tennyson, no doubt, though this side of his character is a little in the background, could have taken his part in one of the jovial 'Noctes,' if he had been sure that no reporters were present. But the massive physical framework seems to be indicated by a certain slowness which might pass into indolence. Your giant may be sensitive, but he carries too much ballast to be easily stirred to utterance. He is contemplative or dreamy rather than impetuous and excitable. If Shelley had put on more flesh, he might have been equally poetical, but he would not have indulged in the boyish explosions which imply an excessive mobility of the nervous system. Byron's extraordinary alternations between corpu-

lence and thinness induced by starvation appear to be clearly connected both with his power and his weakness, and might be considered at length in the essay which ought to be written upon the relation between fat and poetry. But I must not be led into such a digression here. One sees in Tennyson's portraits the deep, dreamy eyes under the noble brow, and recognises the man predestined to be a thoughtful spectator of the battle of life, rather than an active participator in the superficial contrasts.

And here, of course, we have the obvious remarks about the spirit of his generation. Young men were ceasing to feel the revolutionary inspiration, though they were still accessible to the utterances of the departing period. When Byron died in 1824, Carlyle exclaimed that the news came upon his heart 'like a mass of lead'; he felt a 'painful twinge,' as if he had lost a brother. Tennyson, then only fourteen, felt the same news to be an 'awful calamity,' and rushed out-of-doors to write upon the sandstone, 'Byron is dead.' But Byronism soon followed Byron. Shelley was unknown to Tennyson, till his college days at least, and the successor, though, of course, admiring his predecessor's marvellous powers, admitted that

Shelley was 'after too much in the clouds' for him. Keats, on the other hand, he declared, 'would have been among the very greatest of us if he had lived. There is something of the innermost soul of the poet in everything he ever wrote.' 'Wordsworth's very best,' he said, 'is the best in its way that has been sent out by the moderns,' and one is glad to hear that he was once able to express to Wordsworth himself his deep sense of the 'obligation which all Englishmen owed to him.' From various scattered remarks it is clear that Tennyson, like other poets, could be an admirable critic of his brethren; but these sayings are interesting as indicating his own tendencies in early days. How much he actually owed to Keats and Wordsworth must be uncertain. Probably he would have been much the same had he never read a line of either. But one may say that he wished to utter teaching congenial to Wordsworth's in language as perfect as that of Keats's most finished workmanship. The famous hypothetical addition to Wordsworth's poems,

A Mister Wilkinson, a Clergyman,

the authorship of which was claimed both by Tennyson and FitzGerald, indicates the weakness

which was naturally avoided by one who could equally appreciate Keats. Like Keats's, at any rate, Tennyson's poetry shows the dying-out of the old fervour which had stimulated Wordsworth's first efforts, made Coleridge and Southey 'pantisocratists,' and inspired Byron and Shelley during the days of the Holy Alliance. The movements of 1830, both in Europe and England, roused some of Tennyson's circle, such as Sterling and Kemble; but, as far as one can infer from the indications, both Tennyson and Arthur Hallam looked at least doubtfully upon the Reform agitation in England. The Tennysons, indeed, set the bells ringing to the horror of the parson at Somersby when the Bill was passed; but Hallam thought that William IV., when he met the 'first assembly of delegates from a sovereign people' (that is, the first Reformed Parliament), would perhaps be the last King of England; and even Tennyson, a little later, hopes against hope that there are still true hearts in old England 'that will never brook the sight of Baal in the Sanctuary, and St. Simon' (the leader of the famous sect) 'in the Church of Christ.' The St. Simonians show what an 'immense mass of evil' is in existence, and are 'a focus which gathers all its rays.' The Reform

Bill was not to be a descent of Niagara, but a passage over the rapids into a superficially quiet reach. A judicious friend gives another view. Sterling, he says, had been misled, like Shelley, by the desire to abolish unjust institutions, but had afterwards perceived that the right method was to 'implant a principle with which selfishness cannot coexist.' Reformers would complain that they must wait for a long time if they have first to extirpate selfishness. With this we may associate a criticism of Spedding upon the early poems, which showed, he thought, over indulgence 'in the luxuries of the senses, a profusion of splendours, harmonies, perfumes, gorgeous apparels, luscious meats and drinks,' and so forth, which rather 'pall upon the sense,' and make the outward obscure the inner world. The remark falls in with Taine's criticism. Such a Tennyson might be too easily reconciled to the creature-comforts of the upper classes in England and become a mere dreaming Sybarite. His own view of the situation is apparently given in the 'Palace of Art.' It was a comment, as we are told, upon a remark made to him at college by Trench: 'Tennyson, we cannot live in art.' The poem itself is so marvellous a collection of those felicities

of description in which Tennyson is unapproachable, that perhaps it rather raises the question why the architect of the palace should not have stayed there quietly and worshipped 'art for art' for the rest of his days. The conversion comes rather abruptly, but, at least, shows how much Tennyson's mind was occupied with the problem of how the artist is to be also the moralist. I certainly do not quarrel with his solution, which in some sense worked itself out in *In Memoriam*. The moral crisis through which he passed is indicated by the 'Two Voices' or 'Thoughts of a Suicide' (that is, of somebody who decided not to commit suicide), written contemporaneously with the first poems of *In Memoriam*, under a 'cloud of overwhelming sorrow.' All joy, he said, was 'blotted out' of his life and he 'longed for death.' He continued, however, to write, and his writing does not suggest unbroken gloom. He was finally, it would seem, restored to full mental health by the love which was to be the blessing of later years. If we may not call it morbid, it is at least abnormal that the loss of a college friend should cause not only immoderate agony, but such prolonged depression. Arthur Hallam may have deserved all that was said of him, though for us he can only be, like

Sterling, a symbol of the virtue of friendship, a type canonised by genius, but, like some other saints, a little wanting in individuality. We cannot define the merits which prompted eulogies in some ways unparalleled in our literature. Lycidas, as Tennyson and others have said, is a test of poetical sensibility. I deny parenthetically that there can be any universal test in such matters, but the meaning is no doubt that it is a test of the appreciation of such poetical merits as are independent of the pathos of the theme. It is a test, that is, precisely because the beauty of the poetry does not imply any very keen sensibility about the person ostensibly commemorated. Milton could be noble and melodious, though one does not suppose that he lost his appetite for breakfast for a single day after hearing of King's death. The sincerity of Tennyson's grief, on the contrary, is implied in every section. He was, we are told, profoundly impressed by Shakespeare's sonnets when he was writing *In Memoriam*, and we can understand why at the time he then thought them even greater than the plays. The intense passion of some of the sonnets ('no longer mourn for me when I am dead,' for example) equals or surpasses in its way anything in *In Memoriam*. But, whatever

the solution of their mystery, they do not convince me that Shakespeare was at any time disqualified by his emotions from attending to the interests of the Globe Theatre. As an embodiment of the purest passion of friendship, the *In Memoriam* is, I take it, unapproachable; and, in spite of any reservations upon other points, that must be, to some minds, the great source of Tennyson's power over his readers. Mr. Palgrave ends his reminiscences of Tennyson by saying that forty-three years of friendship made him recognise 'lovableness' as the 'dominant note' of his friend's character. That, I think, is also the impression, and certainly there cannot be a better one, which is made by the whole of this biography. Tennyson had his weaknesses, which can be divined where filial reverence properly refrains from an articulate statement or a distinct insistence upon them. Nor, as I shall say directly, can I admit without reservations some other claims to our allegiance. But the unsurpassed sweetness and tenderness of character is evident in every chapter. It is impossible to read the book without learning to love the man better. It is needless to speak of the beauty of the domestic life; needless, at any rate, to express more than the sense of satisfaction that, for once,

a poet, of abnormally sensitive character even for a poet, was surrounded by an atmosphere of unbroken harmony for so many years. If he lost Hallam, he always preserved the friendship of Carlyle (tempered by an occasional growl); of the inimitable FitzGerald, never less delightful because he could never affect insincere admiration; of the wise and placid Spedding, the 'Pope,' as Tennyson called him, of the young men at Trinity; of Maurice, revered by all who knew him for saintliness of character if not for lucidity of intellect; of the cordial and generous Kingsley, and of Mr. Aubrey de Vere, and others who still live and cherish his memory. If he was over-sensitive to 'fleabites' of petty criticism, the irritation never embittered him; no ungenerous and 'nasty' remark about his contemporaries seems to mar the impression of real dignity of character. He thought a good deal about himself: most people do; but any little vanity he shows is perfectly innocent and consistent with substantial simplicity and modesty. His foibles added a certain piquancy to the sentiment of his friends: it is pleasant to feel that you are petting a tender and childlike nature as well as simply sitting at a great man's feet. Undoubtedly a man might be equally lovable and

yet unable to write a line which would not have set Tennyson's teeth on edge. But even Tennyson's astonishing sensibility to the 'music of words,' and his power of compressing into a stanza the quintessence of sentiments or perceptions which other men might dilute into volumes, would have been thrown away without this singular sweetness of character. When I read 'Tears, Idle Tears,' I feel that a man might be forgiven even by a stern moralist for devoting a lifetime to stringing together a few melodious phrases as a perpetual utterance of our better moods. Gray did something of the kind; but Tennyson, though not a voluminous poet, has probably left an unsurpassed number of phrases which will live in the memory both of gentle and simple—the most punctilious 'æsthete' and the reader whose ignorance, better than knowledge, allows him to be charmed without knowing or asking why.

If these volumes contain what we had all more or less divined, they call attention to a claim which may provoke more discussion. Jowett, as we see, regarded Tennyson as a teacher of philosophy. Maurice dedicated his most characteristic volume to Tennyson as to one who has been a great spiritual teacher; and Dr. Martineau, giving

an account of the meeting at the 'Metaphysical Society,' speaks of Maurice's fellowship of thought with 'the truest *vates* of his age.' It becomes an outsider to treat these and other weighty testimonies with all respect. And yet the insistence upon this aspect of Tennyson's work strikes one perhaps as a little excessive. There is, of course, no question as to the depth of Tennyson's interest in theological questions. The frequent recurrence of this claim, however, tends, I think, to give an impression that the famous line ought to have been 'A Mr. Tennyson, a clergyman,' and to put a little too much out of sight the fact that he was not always in the pulpit. He could yield himself, it is obvious, to perfectly unsophisticated enjoyment of sensuous impressions; he could talk very effectively and very humorously as a simple man of letters, or even, if we may say so without offence, as a man of this world capable of hearty contempt for clerical as well as other cants and hypocrisies. I have more than once had a similar surprise in reading biographies of men whom I have seen in the flesh; and the explanation is not far to seek. Fuller tells us somewhere of the bishop who used to go down to the cellar with his old friend and chaplain, where they could throw their canonicals

aside, pledge each other in a good glass of wine, and refresh their souls in a jolly conversation. No doubt they showed on such occasions a side which did not get into official biographies. Tennyson certainly could doff his 'canonicals'; but, however this may be, it suggests another point which demands some delicacy of handling. Professor Sidgwick thinks that *In Memoriam* expresses with admirable clearness a true philosophical judgment of certain tendencies of modern speculation. I cannot discuss that problem on which Professor Sidgwick speaks with authority as well as sympathy. In any case the poetical merit of a work does not depend upon its philosophical orthodoxy. The orthodox, whoever they may be, can be terribly vapid and the heretics much more inspiring. A man would be a very narrow-minded critic who was unable to admire any of the great men from Lucretius to Dante who have embodied the most radically opposite conceptions of the world. But we must draw a line, as Tennyson is reported to have said, between such poets as Keats, Byron, and Shelley, and the 'great sage poets,' at once thinkers and artists, such as Æschylus, Shakespeare, 'Dante, and Goethe.' Can we think of Tennyson himself as belonging

to the highest class? Did he not only accept the right view, whatever that may be, but express it forcibly and majestically as one of the small class which represents poetry thoroughly transfused with philosophy? I at least cannot see my way to such a conclusion; and the mere comparison seems to me to suggest the real limitations to Tennyson's art. I will only notice what is suggested by many passages in these volumes. Carlyle, we are told, was first attracted to Tennyson by the 'Ulysses.' He quotes in his first letter to Tennyson the noble passage :—

> It may be that the gulf will wash us down;
> It may be we shall touch the happy isles
> And see the great Achilles whom we knew.

'These lines,' he says, 'do not make me weep, but there is in me what would fill whole lachrymatories as I read.'[1] Afterwards Carlyle appears to have suggested that Tennyson was wasting his time by scribbling verses. Carlyle, late in life, would occasionally quote the 'Ulysses' by way of contrast with Tennyson's later performances. The old poem, he thought, had the true heroic ring; and Tennyson himself, it may be remarked,

[1] I remember to have heard Carlyle in his old age speak with equal enthusiasm of this poem.

says that it was written soon after Hallam's death, and gave his feelings about fighting the battle of life perhaps more simply than anything in *In Memoriam*. Carlyle's criticism came to this, that Tennyson had declined into a comparatively sentimental and effeminate line of writing, mere 'æstheticisms' instead of inspiring a courageous spirit of confronting the spiritual crisis. The *Idylls of the King* could not be the epic of the future, but at best a melodious version of conventional and superficial solutions of the last problem. King Arthur had (in Carlylese) too much of the 'gigman' to be a great leader of modern men. The average critic, as we are frequently reminded in these volumes, complained that Tennyson was 'morbid.' *Maud*, in particular, gave that offence in spite of irresistible beauties. Tennyson himself argued that the critics confounded the author with his creature. The hero of *Maud* was only a dramatic personage; he was a 'morbid poetic soul,' and the poem was to be taken as 'a little *Hamlet*.' The original *Hamlet* would itself be now criticised, he thought, as 'morbid.' Mr. Gladstone, who first took the poem to represent the worship of Jingo, recanted on further consideration, and discovered that Tennyson had only approved

of 'lawful war'—which makes a great difference. *Maud*, I must say in passing, fell in, at any rate, too easily with the curious delusion of the time (embodied also in Kingsley's *Two Years Ago*) that the Crimean War implied the moral regeneration of the country. Necessary or absurd, I don't think that the war can now be credited with that effect. *Maud*, I fancy, will be remembered for the surpassing beauty of the love lyrics, and not from any lively interest in a hero who is not only morbid, but silly. Hamlet may have been morbid—an interview with one's father's ghost is rather upsetting—but at least he was not contemptible. However, we will not for a moment identify the gentleman in *Maud* with Tennyson. Another poem, 'Despair,' provoked, we are told, bitter criticism, 'because the public did not recognise it as a dramatic monologue.' It is, I think—as I believe the most ardent Tennysonians admit—a distinctly inferior specimen of his art; but it expresses something not purely dramatic. Tennyson himself remarked that he would commit suicide if he thought there was no 'future life'; and his hero acts upon that principle. He is equally shocked by the 'horrible know-nothing books,' and by a view of hell such as commended itself to Tennyson's

aunt; and the suggestion is natural that the reasonable course for a man equally horrified by both opinions is to put an end to himself. It would not be fair to lay any stress upon an admitted shortcoming, and the 'dramatic monologue' argument may be taken for what it is worth. But this, too, is, I think, clear. When Tennyson is presented to us as giving the true solution of the doubts which beset our time, we should have some positive as well as negative testimony to his merits. We cannot, it is true, expect a full solution. A gentleman is reported to have asked him whether the existence of evil was not the great difficulty. Tennyson certainly could not be expected to throw much light upon Job's difficulties, and seems to have judiciously diverted the conversation by referring to the 'charge of the heavy brigade.' No poet, and indeed no philosopher, can be asked to solve the eternal problems off-hand. What we do see, is that Tennyson, like many noble and deep thinkers, was terribly perplexed by the alternatives apparently offered: by his aversion on one side to certain orthodox dogmas, and by his dread and hatred of some tendencies which claim at least to be scientific. His ideal hero was the man who faced doubts boldly and attained clear

convictions of one kind or other. On the other hand, he is always haunted by the fear of depriving your sister of her 'happy views' (a woefully feeble phrase, by the way, for Tennyson), and praises a philosopher for keeping his doubts to himself. The resulting attitude of mind may not be morbid: certainly it may fairly be called pathetic, and even those who do not sympathise with his doctrine will do well to feel for his distress. It may teach them, at least, what is in any case worth knowing: why their teaching is so repulsive to many tender and delicate minds. But I confess to share Carlyle's regret for the loss of the old heroic tone of the 'Ulysses.' Noble poetry, let us admit, may express either faith or scepticism: a conviction that we know or that we can never know; it may be openly pessimistic, or expressive of an enthusiastic faith in the future; but Tennyson, even in the *In Memoriam*, always seems to me to be like a man clinging to a spar left floating after a shipwreck, knowing that it will not support him, and yet never able to make up his mind to strike out and take his chance of sinking or swimming. That may be infinitely affecting, but it is not the attitude of the poet who can give a war-cry to his followers, or of the philosopher

who really dares to 'face the spectres of the mind.' He can lay them for the moment; but they are always in the background, and suggest, too often, rather a querulous protest against an ever-recurring annoyance than any such mental victory as issues in a coherent and settled conviction on either side. I merely wish to indicate an impression, and will not attempt to indicate the similar attitude in regard to the great social and political movements. I cannot, though my inability may be owing to my own spiritual blindness, place him among the 'great sage poets,' but I have wished to intimate that such as I am are not therefore disqualified from appreciating his poetry in another capacity: as a document indicating the effect of modern movements of thought upon a mind of extraordinary delicacy and a nature of admirable sweetness; but, far more, as a perfect utterance of emotions which are all equally beautiful in themselves whatever the 'philosophy' with which they are associated. The life, I believe, will help to strengthen that impression, though I have only attempted to notice some of the more obvious remarks which it may suggest.

PASCAL [1]

PASCAL is one of the great men whose minds have been fascinated by the eternal riddle of existence, and have carried to a logical conclusion one typical mode of meeting if not of answering it; and who have also had the gift of coining thought into language so terse and vivid as to be part of the intellectual currency of all future generations. Yet the thought even of such men had to be expressed in the dialect and applied to the particular circumstances of their time. It may be worth while, therefore, to consider in what way Pascal's view was coloured by the conditions of the day, and what are its true relations to the development of thought. I make no claim to the special knowledge which would be necessary for a full treatment of the subject treatise, and am content to refer, once for all, to Sainte-Beuve's admirable *Port-Royal*, in which the great critic has shown Pascal as a

[1] Lecture before the West London Ethical Society, May 2, 1897.

living man among his surroundings, and pointed out with incomparable skill his relation not only to the religious and philosophical, but to the social, political, and literary movements of a profonndly interesting period. I shall only aim at setting out one or two cardinal points.

First of all, Pascal came at a great period: at the time when philosophic systems were being stirred by the influences named after Descartes and Bacon; when the greatest minds were breaking off the fetters of effete scholasticism; and when it was possible for men of the highest order to take a Pisgah sight of the promised land of knowledge without being distracted and bewildered, like their successors, in the complexity of actual explorations of the region. In one respect Pascal was especially qualified to take part in the new movement. The philosophy of Descartes was essentially a philosophy for mathematicians, for mathematics, at that time, represented the decisive example of intellectual progress. Metaphysics, it seems, might at last become progressive if, instead of wearily rambling round the old dialectical circle, it could adopt similar methods. Descartes laid down the principle. Spinoza's *Ethics*, appropriating the forms of geometrical demonstration, and presenting the whole

universe as an incarnate Euclid, shows the rational consummation of the experiment. Now, Pascal was obviously a heaven-born mathematician. By the age of twelve, we are told, he had thought out for himself the elementary propositions of Euclid; by nineteen he had invented and constructed a calculating machine, and obtained results which were important steps towards the differential calculus developed by Newton and Leibnitz. In his last years, when attacked by a bad toothache, he returned to the studies which had long been thrown aside, and in a few sleepless nights discovered certain geometrical theorems. His results were published, and the mathematicians of Europe challenged to find out the proof. After three months' labour, Wallis, the ablest English mathematician of the day, produced a proof—not, it was said, satisfactory. Patriotism induces me to add that Wallis had no toothache to stimulate him. At an early age, however, Pascal's health had broken down; from his eighteenth year until his death he never had a day free from pain. His first conversion, at the age of twenty-three, induced him to throw aside scientific activity as a worldly vanity. He became closely associated with the remarkable Port-Royal community, and appeared as their

champion in the *Provincial Letters* in 1656. The *Provincial Letters* marked an epoch in theological disputes and in literature. His friends, when put on their defence, had entangled themselves in hopelessly intricate controversies, devoid apparently of all human interest. Pascal put the point so clearly and with such dexterous irony, that not only the religious world but the world of laughers and of sensible men—rightly powerful in France—came to his side. When he had finished, the great Society of Jesus was stamped with an opprobrium from which it has never been able to free itself, and Pascal had created, once for all, so the highest authorities assure us, a model of admirable French prose. He showed for the first time what we all now know, the unrivalled fitness of his language for clear, logical, convincing statement; and in his hands the perfect form was the more impressive because it everywhere indicates, and is yet never perturbed by, profound conviction and a deep glow of moral indignation. From controversy with the Jesuits he turned to controversy with the Rationalists. The *Pensées*, as we have them now, are but a fragment of an intended vindication of Christianity. As we had them till lately, they were a fragment distorted by the labours of pious

editors. After a year's labour, Pascal had sunk into such feebleness that for the last four years of his life he could only jot down disconnected thoughts. And yet the book, pieced together by well-intentioned friends, made an impression which has hardly grown weaker with time. That a man, dying before forty, immersed in ascetic practices, and having to struggle against constant infirmity, should have produced so great an effect in philosophy, in science, and in literature, is astonishing; and I think that, even among the great men of a great time, there is no one who excites more the sense of pure wonder at sheer intellectual power.

What was the result of his thought? Eminent critics have puzzled themselves as to whether Pascal was a sceptic or a genuine believer; having, I suppose, convinced themselves, by some process not obvious to me, that there is an incompatibility between the two characters. We shall perhaps see the relation more clearly hereafter. I can subscribe, at any rate, with one remark made by Sainte-Beuve.[1] 'You may not cease to be a sceptic,' he says, 'after reading Pascal; but you must cease to treat believers with contempt' —possibly because you will find how near they

[1] *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. v.

come to being sceptics. At any rate, it is well to unlearn contempt for anybody; and, if only for that reason, it may be worth while to consider Pascal's position a little more closely. We shall do so best, I think, by considering the central theory which connects the *Letters* and the *Thoughts*, and gives the real starting-point of his speculation.

The *Letters to a Provincial* open by an exposition of certain disputes about grace, which call up faint memories of the endless and intricate controversies of the time. The technical terms, justification, sanctification, election, grace, predestination, and the like, still occur in respectable text-books of theology, like fossils which show what strange monsters once cumbered the earth. Yet the discussions were the temporary embodiment of inquiries which still interest us profoundly in a different dialect, and involve really vital points of morality. The creed represented by Jansenius has carried on an intermittent warfare with its antagonist at the critical periods of Christian theology. He had declared himself to be simply reproducing the teaching of Augustine, who had elaborated the teaching of St. Paul; and, under the shelter of those infallible authori-

ties, Jansenius roundly declared that the whole system accepted by Catholic divines of his day was a perversion of the truth. The great reformer Calvin had founded his edifice upon the same base, and to make room for it had demolished the authority of the Pope. Naturally Jansenists were accused of sympathising with that abominable heresiarch, and, strongly as they denied the consequence, of being logically bound to abandon either their doctrines or their loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. Augustine's authority, of course, might not be openly assailed; how then did the doctrines of Calvin and of Jansenius—professedly applications of Augustine's—differ from it and from each other and from the accepted system? Such problems presented a wide field for the subtlety of theologians, and they were not slow to take advantage of the opening and to pile up libraries of distinctions and confutations and interpretations. Beneath the technical phrases lay the real question. What is virtue? Undoubtedly, according to the theologian, it means conformity to a divine law, and it implies the divine grace which disposes the heart to conformity. But which is the ultimate standing-point? Shall we

consider morality as a law imposed from without and enforced by the sanctions of heaven and hell, or as defining the state of the heart or the will, which makes the 'law' the spontaneous expression of conduct? 'Law' has in one case the juridical sense, and refers to a compulsion exercised upon the will; in the other, the scientific sense, and refers to the intrinsic character of the will itself. An emphasis upon one or other aspect of the question leads to indefinitely varying shades of opinion and a boundless exercise of metaphysical subtlety. But one practical application meanwhile shows its vital importance. If you can regard morality simply as an 'external' law—comparable to human law—and then, as a system of rules enforced by spiritual penalties and administered by priests, you leave the road open to all the abuses which provoked the Reformation. The Church holds the keys and can absolve sin. A corrupt Church may use its power in the interests of spiritual tyranny and pervert the morality of which it becomes the official guardian. The sinner escapes the consequences of his sins by submitting to an external process: he is pardoned, not because his heart is purified, but because he has paid his fine to the representatives of God on

earth. The Reformers, therefore, insisted upon the doctrine of justification by grace to cut up the system of sacerdotal power at the roots. The conversion of the heart, they said, was everything; the external conformity nothing; and the sacraments in general became mere commemorations—useful so far as stimulating the imagination, but not of themselves possessing any supernatural charm.

The Jansenists, accepting the same principle, stopped short at the critical point. Though they laid equal stress upon a change of heart, or 'conversion,' which has the same prominence with them as with the Calvinists or our English Methodists, they also held most strenuously that the sacraments were divinely appointed means of conversion. Thus they represented, as their antagonists said, a semi-Protestantism, which had illogically to combine a belief in the supernatural character of the sacramental system and the priesthood with an insistence upon the paramount importance of the change of heart. This indicates the line upon which Pascal came into internecine struggle with the Jesuits. The opening letters which touch upon certain problems about sufficient and efficacious grace show

extraordinary skill, but are chiefly directed to unmask the dexterous equivocation which enabled one wing of his antagonists who really admitted the Jansenists' position to condemn it under cover of an ambiguous term. These letters do not go into the argument itself. But Pascal presently advances to the moral problem. Then he comes to close quarters : he denounces the Jesuits with astonishing vigour as corrupters of morality at its very source ; as sanctioning lying, manslaughter, and impurity ; as teaching doctrines wholly opposed to the law of Christ ; and briefly as deserving of all that the most bitter Protestants have ever said of the Scarlet Lady. I have no pretensions to judge of the justice of Pascal's attacks, though I cannot avoid a strong suspicion that he hit some very weak points ; but for my purpose it is enough to assume his sincerity, which is beyond a doubt, and, taking his statement of facts for granted, to consider the logic of the assault. What, then, was the system attacked? The Jesuits, of course, were the most devoted adherents of the Church, and in that capacity the supporters of its system of government. The Catholic is not only a believer in certain dogmas, but a subject of a great ecclesiastical hierarchy.

He is governed throughout the whole sphere of conduct by an elaborate code of law, the administration of which is confided by the Church to the confessor. The confessor must have some definite rule to estimate the importance of sins and to know the conditions of pardon. Such a law had been elaborated by the casuists. They had put together a code of spiritual legislation, coinciding in some directions with the ordinary laws of the State, but in others going into every conceivable detail of conduct with which the merely human legislator is incompetent to deal. It was, in short, morality made into law. Here, then, we have the utmost possible elaboration of that view of morality against which the Jansenists protested: the view which assimilates it to an external or municipal law, differing from such law only in the nature of the sanctions—in substituting hell or purgatory for the gallows or the prison—and the all-comprehensive nature of its subject-matter. Not only every act which affects others, but every act affecting the man himself, and even his most secret thoughts or intentions, may come within its purview.

We must notice the way in which this system presented itself to Pascal. The casuist, in the first

place, has to classify sins as the secular legislator classifies crimes. This act, says the legislator, is murder; that, only manslaughter. The law must define, that it may not be arbitrary; it must define by external or tangible facts because the judge cannot look into the heart; and it must define actions taken by themselves, and apart from the life-history of each particular agent. Deliberate killing under certain conditions is murder, whoever commits the action and whatever his motive. It follows that actions of the most varying moral quality must be classed together. Murder, that is, deliberate killing by any one not legally authorised, may imply the deepest depravity or admit of palliation to an indefinite degree. To assign the moral guilt implied by the criminal act you would have to take into account all the concrete circumstances of the case—the man's whole character, position, training, and intellectual capacity; in other words, to consider precisely the aspects which the legislator is compelled to neglect. It follows that the criminal law can only correspond in a rough way, or on the average of cases, to the moral law. But then the legislator does not profess to identify his law with morals. When, however, you profess, as the casuists professed,

that you are interpreting the moral law itself, and declaring what is the morality of an action in the sight of Omniscience; and when, at the same time, you are forced to adopt the legislator's method—to classify acts apart from the agent, to say this or that act is wrong whatever the concrete circumstances or the motives which led to it; you are at once both claiming to be a moralist and omitting the characteristically moral aspect. You are trying to define the intrinsic quality of conduct by circumstances which are of necessity more or less accidental. Here, as I think, is the fundamental difficulty, though it is not presented exactly in this way by Pascal.

Pascal's indignation was roused by results which follow logically from this position. He specially attacks the two great doctrines of the Jesuits—the doctrine of 'probability,' and the doctrine of 'intention.' By their help morality may be moulded and perverted to any extent. What, then, are these doctrines? The analogy of law gives the explanation. The English law, for example, has been developed by familiar processes. As new cases arise, they are decided by the judges, who, while nominally applying the settled rules, are in reality extending and modifying them.

Apart from direct legislation, the law is constantly growing by such decisions, and each decision becomes law by becoming a precedent. Now, in the case of morality, new legislation was out of the question. The law had been given once for all in inspired writings. But the divine law summed up the principle in a few maxims, and what was necessary for the confessor was a system of rules applicable to particular actions. 'Do not lie.' But what precisely is lying? When is lying a mortal or a venial sin? and are there any exceptions when lying is right? The confessor must have his rules, and they were given to him by the casuist. The casuist composed the professional text-book, and, so far as he gained authority, the text-book eventually made the law, like the decisions of the English judges. This is the doctrine of 'probability.' When a writer of gravity had said that this or that action was permissible, his view became 'probable,' that is, it made a precedent upon which you were entitled to act. If a given action was permitted by any man of authority, it could not be assumed to be a sin, even though it had been condemned by others. It would be hard, obviously, to punish a man for doing something which had been declared to be

innocent by a judge of the high court. Such a decision was at least law in the making, and, until implicitly condemned by the Church, must be regarded as establishing a presumption, and therefore a right to act upon it. Hence morality changed. The great Doctor Diana had by his authority made opinions probable, and consequently actions, sinful before, had now ceased to be sins. Pascal found a happy illustration in the case of one Jean d'Alba. He was a servant in a Jesuit College, and confessed to the judges that he had stolen some of the plate. He had, however, looked into his masters' books, and justified the theft by an opinion of the excellent Père Baumy. A valet, that casuist had said, might steal some of his master's property if his wages were insufficient. The opinion of Baumy was enough to establish a probability: John held that his wages were insufficient, and therefore could steal without sin. The secular judges declined to accept the doctrine; but Alba disappeared, and it is apparently implied that his Jesuit masters had seen the force of his appeal to their principles.

The case shows how the law might be developed; and another result shows how development might amount to inversion. A great part is played in

English law by what are called legal fictions. Lawyers have been able in many most important cases to alter the law by ingenious devices for applying to one case rules primarily and ostensibly intended for others. The same system in casuistry involved the doctrine of 'intention,' and its application may be made clear by one very important case. The Church had condemned usury absolutely. It is wrong to take interest, because you have only a right to the return of exactly what you have lent. When it became clear that to condemn usury was to condemn commerce, the law had to be tacitly modified to conform to the new conditions. The casuists achieved this result, as Pascal tells us, by an ingenious device called the *contrat Mohatra*—the main principle of which is simple. I give £1000 to a man and agree to receive £1100 a year hence. Have I not lent money at ten per cent. and committed the sin of usury? Not a bit of it! I simply bought goods at a low price and paid the money. That, every one agrees, is permissible. Soon afterwards, indeed, I sold the same goods to the same man at a much higher price, and allowed him to pay me for them at a later date. These were two separate transactions, and in each of them I was

perfectly justified. Therefore I was justified when I combined the two. Considered from the legal point of view, such devices may be a necessary though clumsy and indirect mode of altering an antiquated law. If the prohibition of usury be superstitious, it may be well to circumvent it by such circuitous means. But when the legal method is applied to a moral law, when you at the same time affirm the moral law to be divine and immutable while you are eviscerating it of its whole substance, you are playing fast and loose with morality itself. The device in this case, which admits of innumerable applications, is what was called directing the intention. I elaborately pretend, that is, to be doing one thing when I am doing another, and succeed in getting the benefit of one wicked action by doing two actions, harmless separately and averting my mind in each case from the action which is to be its complement. So duelling is forbidden. But it is surely not forbidden to defend my life or honour. I may, again, tell a man without sin that I am going to take a walk in a field and shall probably have a sword by my side. If he goes there, too, and attacks me, I may rightly resist him, even by running him through the

body; and I shall have done nothing that does not come under the head of self-defence. Pascal says that, by similiar devices, it was shown that a member of a religious body might murder a man who intended to spread scandal about his society, and discusses the ingenious problem which had been raised as to whether a Jesuit might not on this ground murder a Jansenist. The murder had been forbidden, but only for the reason that the attacks of the Jansenists upon Jesuit morality were too feeble to do real injury to their adversaries—a ground which, as Pascal slyly observes, it might be difficult to maintain on behalf of the author of the *Provincial Letters*.

I have gone so far into this to point out the real underlying contrast. Essentially the struggle is between the view which assimilates the moral law to the positive law, and that which makes it define the heart or character; between the law which says 'do this' and the law which says 'be this.' The ultimate moral principles, understood as defining the qualities of the heart, may claim to be immutable and eternal. Love your neighbour as yourself! it has been said, sums up the whole of your duty to men, and is true in all times and places. Substitute for this an external law—an

attempted catalogue of the precise actions which I am to do if I love my neighbour—and you must at once have innumerable exceptions and distinctions: the law must alter as circumstances change; and actions be classed under one clause or another, according to superficial distinctions which sometimes, as we see, enable you to get the benefit of one crime by combining two innocent actions. Therefore, if you attribute the immutability of the internal law of the heart to the external law of conduct, you are forced to equivocate and have recourse to subterfuge. When, again, the process is carried on, as Pascal held that the Jesuits were carrying it on, with the distinct purpose of accommodating the Church to the world, and obtaining wider influence by lowering the price of obedience, it is no wonder that he condemned, as the Puritan in all ages condemns, the shuffler. Behind this lies a still deeper question. From Pascal's point of view, forgiveness must be an empty word except as a consequence of a change of heart: a man should desire, not escape from the penalty of an action, but purification of the soul from the passion; not absolution won by the magic effect of a sacrament, but conversion and regeneration. From the Jesuit point of view the case was

inverted. Absolution must really remit sin, or the power of the Church loses its virtue, and the keys cease to turn the lock. In the Jesuit view, you keep a debtor and creditor account: your score must be fully cleared when the fine has been paid for each separate sin. If the external law be the moral law, conformity to it must be sufficient in the sight of God as well as of the priest. One striking consequence is given in the tenth letter, where Pascal's indignation raises him to the highest pitch of eloquence. The problem occurred as to what state of mind was sufficient to secure absolution. Must your remorse imply love of God, or is it enough to be afraid of hell? Fear of hell may of course prevent a bad act, and leave a corrupt heart. If, however, it secures obedience, does it not remove guilt? The Jesuits, according to Pascal, accepted the result implied by their logic. Suarez thought it enough if one loved God at any time before death: Vasquez, if in 'the article of death'; others if at baptism; others, if on fast days. Hurtado de Mendoza considered that one ought to love God once every year; Coninck, once in three or four years; Henriquez, every five years; while Father Sirmonet decided after discussing these opinions

that one need not love God at all if one obeyed His other commands. God, he argued, wants us to love Him simply in order that we may obey His laws. If, then, we can obey Him without love, He would be unreasonable to insist upon a different motive. Queen Victoria, we may say, may demand obedience from her subjects, but she does not claim a legal right to their personal affection. That singular avowal rouses Pascal to one of those passages which score an indelible brand upon the adversary. The love of God was the great commandment, and the Jesuits have succeeded in explaining it away and paying God compliments for not enforcing so harsh a law.

Here we reach Pascal's fundamental point: To be good is to love God. The sinner's heart, then, must be changed; not the correct blood fee paid for a homicide. No mere external operation can avail to reconcile man to God. Then, we may infer, dipping a baby in water will not avert damnation? From that conclusion, which appears to be plausible, Pascal recoiled, though he saw the difficulty. We shall see his answer. Meanwhile, another perplexity follows. You demand a change of heart: but how can the heart be changed? Can a being change not only his conduct but himself?

If not, the change must be supernatural. Nothing but divine grace can make the man good. St. Paul and Augustine and Calvin have given definite form to this result by the doctrine of predestination. What, then, becomes of the freewill which, it was urged, was essential to merit? You give a higher place to morality by making it a function of the heart instead of a restraint upon actions; but in doing so you have made it unattainable by man, and therefore destroyed his responsibility. The theory of grace, as St. Paul put it, makes man the pot in the hands of the potter. The Creator and not the creature is the true cause both of vice and virtue. Admit that man can do nothing without grace, and he becomes a mere automaton moved by the arbitrary power of God. Suppose him, on the other hand, able to do something, and that God will always help him, and then you virtually make him do everything; for the grace of God is, so to speak, a constant condition which will be an inevitable consequence of the man's freewill. Pascal, of course, was sensible of this logical difficulty, and in dealing with it falls into subtleties resembling those of his enemies. It indeed appears to be impossible, except by the help of merely verbal distinctions, to divide the

provinces of the two, or to make anything of either without virtually mixing up everything.

This problem is one which still exercises many minds in different dialects; and I, of course, am content to notice the fact. It indicates also the connection between the *Provincial Letters* and the *Thoughts*. The problem which has met Pascal in the controversy with the Jesuits is really besetting him in the *Thoughts*, and there he finds the solution which on one side is sceptical and on the other orthodox. For Pascal, as for the great men whom he follows, the starting-point is precisely this identification of all goodness with divine grace. Augustine, more fitly than Spinoza, might be called 'God intoxicated,' and in the *Confessions* we have the most impressive example of an imagination which interprets the world as everywhere permeated by the divine presence and the heart moved by a sense of personal relation to its Creator. Pascal gives an embodiment of the same pervading sentiment, and his work involves one dominant thought: If you attribute every good impulse to the Creator, what is left for the creature? Clearly only the bad or the absolutely neutral. Belief in divine grace, thus understood, has, therefore, for its correlative doctrine the cor-

ruption of man. If all that is good be supernatural, the natural must be other than good. And this is, in fact, the doctrine around which all Pascal's *Pensées* revolve. The doctrine of the corruption of human nature is, he says, mysterious, and yet it is this mystery alone which makes man intelligible to himself. Christianity, he says, reveals two great truths: the corruption of man's nature and the redemption through Christ. It is in passing these two opposite poles of truth alternately that he sometimes appears as a sceptic and sometimes as a humble believer. He joins hands at moments with the sceptics and the pessimists: he even outdoes their strongest assertions; and at the next moment he is prostrating himself before the Church, accepting mysteries, adoring the sacraments, and arguing for the most groundless traditions, and believing (I say it with a certain sense of shame) in the most trumpery of modern 'miracles.' The modern agnostic or the modern worshipper at Lourdes may equally find support in his *dicta*. Is this an inconsistency or a deeper insight than that of either side? At any rate, in this lies, I think, the great interest of Pascal. The extraordinary force with which he sums up both sets of convictions casts into the

shade all the feebler repetitions of similar combinations of faith and scepticism. The half-hearted unbelievers who turn sentimental over the charms of decayed superstition, and the half-hearted believers who flirt with scepticism to prove that a lie is as good as a truth, may equally derive inspiration from Pascal, but fail to equal his charm because they have not his earnestness and intellectual courage, and what we might almost call the brutal frankness of his avowals. Whatever we may think of his philosophy, every line indicates a consuming desire for a genuine standing-ground which at least commands respect.

Let us turn first to the sceptical side of Pascal. He begins the *Pensées* by showing us men poised between the two infinites. It is a curious proof of his power that the mathematical illustration near the beginning—the passage in which he imagines a mite, and then the smallest corpuscle in the mite's body, and then a new universe within the corpuscle, and a mite in that universe, and so forth—which, in other hands, would appear as quaint or extravagant[1]—is made profoundly im-

[1] A curious application of the same illustration may be found in De Morgan's *Budget of Paradoxes*, p. 321, where it is used not to depress but to exalt human intelligence, by showing how far it can push the 'evaluation of π.'

pressive by the throb of emotion indicated. Man, then is a mere speck in the universe, placed between the two abysses of the infinite and of nothingness, unable to comprehend either; floating on a vast ocean, where as soon as he grasps a fact it changes and vanishes on his hands; where he burns with desire to find a firm base for a structure of belief, and where the whole foundation is always crumbling and the earth opening to the abysses. This, he says, is the misery of man; and yet the misery proves his greatness. Man is great because he knows his misery. He is a reed, the feeblest in nature; but yet he is a 'thinking reed.' A vapour, a drop of water might kill him; but should the whole universe crush him, he is nobler than it, for he knows that he is crushed, and the universe knows not that it crushes. He is great as a discrowned king. His present state proves his misery; but his perception that it is misery proves that he has fallen from a higher state, and suggests that that state may be restored.

Then Pascal proceeds to examine human nature, and concentrates in his maxims the pith of many students who have preached upon the text, 'Vanity of Vanities.' The self-conceit of man; the empti-

ness of his aim; his heartless search for distractions; his hopeless enslavement to the illusions of the imagination; his substitution of custom for reason —all the futile speculations and windy ways of men—are described with a keen insight which reveals to us the countryman of Rochefoucauld and the student of Montaigne. The name of Montaigne is especially significant. Pascal's own experience of the actual world had been brief, though a brief experience was much to so penetrating a mind. He had been behind the scenes of ecclesiastical intrigues, and had looked on at the Fronde in France and at the Civil War in England. Politics seemed to him a vast game played for mere personal ends and decided by accident. Cromwell would have ravaged all Christendom but for a grain of sand in his passages; and, if Cleopatra's nose had been shorter the whole face of the earth would have been changed. In this sphere of meditation, however, Montaigne had been Pascal's great teacher. A conversation in which he gave his opinion of Montaigne and Epictetus is of singular significance; and many sentences of Montaigne have passed almost without alteration into his own pages. Of Montaigne, certainly one of the most delightful of all writers

to the worldly, I need only say this: that he reveals (among other things) the impression made upon a most discursive and wayward but strangely shrewd and humorous observer by the bitter controversies and religious wars of the sixteenth century. His amazing good temper and humorous delight in conversation enables him to explore with unfailing amusement the multitudinous foibles of human nature—the ambitions, and self-seekings, and hypocrisies displayed by the actors in the great tragi-comedy of life. The inevitable philosophical conclusion for such a man is the famous *que sais-je?* of Montaigne's motto—in other words, complete scepticism. This conclusion, too, is explicitly drawn, often in words adopted by Pascal, in Montaigne's most elaborate essay on the *Apology of Raymond de Sebonde.* Here, in a comment upon a professed demonstration of natural theology, Montaigne, in his queer discursive fashion, manages to intimate his own opinion. It is, briefly, that man is but one of the animals—a doctrine confirmed, it is true, by a set of anecdotes as to elephants and dogs which would startle even the editor of the *Spectator*—that the reason of which we boast is thus little more than a blind custom, and that to suppose man capable by

reason of attaining to a knowledge of the Deity is the height of absurdity, As Sir W. Hamilton did long afterwards, he quotes the Athenian inscription, 'To the Unknown God,' as the last word of religious philosophy. He will confute the unbeliever, he says, by trampling human pride under his feet; by making men feel their inanity and the feebleness of their reason, bow their heads and bite the earth under the authority of Divine Majesty. And of this method Pascal in the conversation expresses his cordial approval. He loves to see Montaigne humiliate the pride of reason by its own arms, and lower man's nature to the level of the beasts. Montaigne, indeed, had erred because he had stopped at this point: he had exposed the misery but not the greatness of man. How, indeed, could Montaigne go further? He is emphatically the man of this world. He has to deal with human passions as he finds them. He watches the drama as impartially as Shakespeare. He quietly puts aside conversion as impossible. He does not, as he puts it, hold with the Pythagoreans that men assume a new soul when they visit the realm of the gods. He is far more at home with Plutarch, or with his favourite Lucretius, than with Christian dogmas and traditions; and

is smiling in his sleeve at the passionate eagerness of theological as well as philosophical partakers in the turmoil. To Pascal, therefore, he exactly represents the natural man: the man fallen from his high estate, but—what is strange—not even conscious that he has fallen. One thing, says Pascal in his opening *Thoughts*, is unintelligible to me: that is, man's indifference. It irritates me, he declares, rather than excites my pity. What! shall a man say I know not whence I come or whither I go—whether at death I shall be annihilated or fall into the hands of an angry God; and therefore I will live without even trying to find out? The man who will risk his life and soul for some trifling point of honour will remain careless on this inconceivably important point! It must be an incomprehensible enchantment, a supernatural benumbing of the faculties, which can explain such a state of mind. And yet this indifference is the meaning of Montaigne's *que sais-je?* If he thought of the angry God as a possibility, he probably comforted himself, in the words of the poet:

> He 's a good fellow and 'twill all be well.

Pascal wasn't so sure of that.

Where, then, is Pascal's escape? In humiliat-

ing the intellect, has he not put out the only light, faint and flickering as it may be, that can guide us through the labyrinth? No, he says, the heart has its reasons that reason does not know. Many men have said so before and since; and it is mainly the vigour with which Pascal puts his view —the unflinching audacity with which he accepts conclusions from which others shrink—that makes his version stand out as the fullest utterance of his view. Man is, he tells us, a chimera, a monster, a contradiction. He judges all things and is a mere worm; a depository of the truth and a sink of error; at once the glory and the shame of the universe. Nature confounds the Pyrrhonists, and reason confounds the dogmatists. You must belong to one sect or the other, and yet you can remain in neither. Powerless reason, be humiliated! Imbecile nature, be silent! Hear God. To hear God is to feel the divine power. All that is good in us comes from grace. Our knowledge of God is therefore, if I may so say, a product of the reaction of the heart moved by divine grace. It is the response of the passive spirit to the one all-powerful stimulus. That, in fact, is the true theory of every mystic, though it leads of necessity to very divergent conclusions. Pascal's

conclusion is still marked by the sceptical element. He will believe, and yet Montaigne cannot be quite expelled. Montaigne, says Sainte-Beuve, is to Pascal like the fox which gnawed the vitals of the Spartan boy—a torment, yet almost a part of himself. Though a mystic, he is a mathematician, clear-headed, precise, impatient of mere vague reverie. He must have a sharp, clear-cut answer. And the result is noteworthy. The conflict expresses itself in the famous argument which may be called Pascal's wager. You declare that you know nothing, he says: let us then argue the question upon that ground. God is or is not; it is a question of heads or tails. On which side will you bet? The right thing, you will reply, in cases of absolute ignorance is not to bet at all. Yes, but *il faut parier*: you must bet. You are engaged in the game willy-nilly, and cannot be a mere looker-on. Now, the stakes are infinite. If you bet on God's existence and win your bet, you gain infinitely; even if you lose your bet, you lose nothing. On the other side, if you bet against His existence, the stake lost may be infinite and the stake gained nothing. Can you, then, hesitate? One feels grateful to Pascal for putting so forcibly an argument which more timid theologians

insinuate without daring explicitly to enfold. I must point out, however, that a curious assumption is involved. To say that eternal happiness depends on the existence of God is intelligible; but that is not the same as to say that it must depend on my belief in the existence of God. There is a chance that certain conduct may have disastrous consequences. It is just possible, however improbable, that this bit of bread may be poisoned: that is a conclusive reason for not eating it, however infinitesimal the chance may be, if I have another bit of bread which is altogether beyond suspicion. In such cases—and they are illustrated everywhere in life, since we must everywhere be guided by probability—a small chance may be as unequivocal a reason for conduct as a complete certainty. Needlessly to encounter even the smallest risk of a terrible catastrophe is of course unreasonable. But though this is a sufficient ground for conduct, it is no ground at all for belief. Because there is just a chance of the catastrophe, I must avoid the chance: well and good; but must I therefore believe the chance to be a certainty? That is clearly contradictory, and, indeed, the proper inference is the very reverse. To act as if a thing existed is often necessary, though its existence be highly impro-

bable. To act, again, *as if* it existed is too commonly to persuade myself against reason that it does exist certainly. There are few errors which are more seductive and against which I am more bound to be on my guard. We might, therefore, reply to Pascal: If there be a slight chance of my being damned eternally for certain conduct, that is a conclusive reason for avoiding the conduct; but it is also a conclusive reason for not saying that I am certain to be damned. If the mere possibility be as decisive a guide for conduct as the calamity, that is so far a reason for not confusing chance with certainty. According to you the slightest belief is a sufficient reason. Then why try to hold an absolute belief? After all, if there be such a God as you suppose, He may choose—it is not a very wild hypothesis—to damn me for lying or deliberate self-deception. If, as we are supposing, He has not supplied me with evidence of a fact, He may be angry with me for deliberately manufacturing beliefs without evidence —for believing absolutely what I can only know to be probable; He may do so—if we may venture to attribute to Him a certain magnanimity—even if the fact considered be the fact of His own existence. You contemplate a Deity who wishes

to be believed to all hazards, even if He has not given reasons for belief, even therefore if the demand imply the grossest injustice. What is the chance that God, if there be a God, acts on this principle, and not on the opposite principle?

Pascal, logical as he is, seems to overlook this, and for a simple reason. The commands which God is supposed to give us on penalty of damnation, are not simple commands of morality, but commands of religion: we are commanded to worship Him, love Him, and promote His glory, and we cannot do so without believing in Him. The belief, then, is not so much directly ordered as indirectly implied in the practices ordered. Thus the distinction therefore, which I have suggested between conduct and belief, does not show itself. The heart is to obey the divine grace, and the obedience implies recognition of the source of grace. The mathematical view passes, therefore, into the mystical; and hence follows another famous conclusion. The Montaigne element makes a last rally. I am, it exclaims, a mere passive being; I am ordered to believe, but I am not free. I am so made that I cannot believe. What am I to do? Give me proofs and I may be persuaded. No, says Pascal, I cannot give you

logical proofs. He has, indeed, sufficiently broken with all mathematical demonstration. Epictetus, as he remarks, falls into the opposite error to Montaigne, for Epictetus imagined that we could rise by reason to a knowledge of God. Pascal had to some degree accepted Descartes's metaphysics in scientific matters. But, as he told his sister, he could not forgive Descartes as a philosopher. Descartes had tried to do without God as far as he could, and was only forced to retain a God in order to give a fillip to set the machinery of the world in motion. Grave metaphysicians have been scandalised at this criticism, and pointed out that Descartes actually invented or refurbished an argument to demonstrate the existence of God. Pascal, of course, did not explicitly deny its force. He only said that such languid arguments did not move men's hearts. It would, I fancy, be truer to say that, if conclusive, they prove the existence of a Being radically different from Pascal's. They go to prove the existence of a first cause and of the unity of the universe, and of a Being identical with the universe; but if anything they disprove the angry Deity, hating sin and punishing sinners, into whose hands Pascal feared to fall. His answer is therefore different. We are, said Pascal,

automata, as Descartes had said, though we are also spirits; as automata we believe by custom and instinct, and all that we can do is to accustom ourselves to submit to the right impulses. How, then, will you believe? Learn from those who have preceded you, and observe them cured of the disease from which you suffer. How is that? By acting as if they believed, he replies; by taking holy water, causing masses to be said, and so forth. 'Naturellement celà vous fera croire et vous abêtira.' That will make you believe, and will stupefy you. Pascal's commentators have again shrunk from this daring phrase, and tried to explain it away as a mere note to be more delicately put.[1] The crudity of the words perhaps lets out the secret. Some people seem to think that it gives the truth. Now that the danger of appealing to reason has become more marked, Pascal's remedy has become more popular; and I need hardly say that there are plenty of establishments in this neighbourhood where you may try the efficacy of the Holy Water cure.

Was Pascal then a sceptic or a sincere believer?

[1] I guess that Pascal was thinking of Montaigne, who, in the essay upon Raymond de Sebonde, says, speaking of the evil of excessive sensibility, 'Il nous faut abestir pour nous assagir.'

The answer is surely obvious. He was a sincere, a humble, and even an abject believer precisely because he was a thorough-going sceptic. One point must be touched, however, though it cannot be elaborated. The obvious objection to an appeal to the heart is that the answer is necessarily what is called subjective: is satisfactory to the believer, but to the believer alone: the 'will to believe'—as Professor W. James calls it in a recent essay, where he modifies and in some sense rehabilitates Pascal's bet—implies that you believe what you will. I choose to believe this, and you choose to disbelieve it. There is no reconciliation. The Hindu fakir can persuade himself of the enmity of Vishnu as the Christian monk of the divinity of the Saviour. Holy water was used by Pagans as well as by Catholics. Pascal was partly blinded to this by the smallness of the world in his time. He saw as a mathematician that man was between two infinites. Geometry makes us sensible of the fact. But 'history' still meant a mere six thousand years. The Catholic Church could still represent itself to the historian as the central phenomenon of all human history, not as an institution which dates but from a geological yesterday, and peculiar to a special group of

nations which forms but a minute minority of the race. Faith in God could therefore be identified with faith in the Church, and a little factor in a vast evolution as equivalent to the whole. The historical argument to which he proceeds is therefore only remarkable for naïveté. 'Those,' he says, 'who saw Lamech, who saw Adam, also saw Jacob, who saw those who saw Moses. Therefore the deluge and the creation are true.' Who will answer for them? To prove anything, that is, you have only to invent evidence as well as to invent facts. That is not Pascal's strong point, and is worthy only of a man who could believe in the Holy Thorn.

The great Pascal, however, remains. This much I will venture to say. The root of all Pascal's creed, if I have judged rightly, is that primary doctrine: Man is corrupt, and all good is due to the inspiration of God. I think, therefore I am, says Descartes: I tremble, therefore God is, adds Pascal. His creed is made of feeling as well as of logic. That gives scepticism on one side and faith on the other. I can believe nothing of myself because I am naturally imbecile. I can accept any belief unhesitatingly, because I am conscious of the power which moves my heart.

The belief may be intellectually absurd. The doctrine of inherited guilt is monstrous, says Pascal: can a child be damned for an action committed six thousand years before its birth? Nothing, he admits, so shocking; and yet, he adds, it is essential to understanding man. It is simply one aspect of that profound antinomy from which we start. Is there, then, any such antinomy? Is human nature absolutely corrupt? Divines calmly tell us that it is a fact. Doubtless it is a fact, if you mean that men have bad impulses, and if you further assume that all good influences come from a supernatural source. But why should I? Why interpret man and the world as the meeting-place of these tremendous contradictions? Why divide a single though exceeding complex process into a battle-ground between two wholly opposed forces? I confess that I should correct Montaigne, so far as he needs correction, by allowing more liberally for the nobler impulses of human nature —not by stripping man of all virtue and handing over the good to an inconceivable and inscrutable force. If you once begin by introducing an omnipotent struggling with a finite being, this may be the logical result; but I do not see my way to the first step. Meanwhile, I do see some

painful results. I see that Pascal's morality becomes distorted; that in the division between grace and nature some innocent and some admirable qualities have got to the wrong side; that Pascal becomes a morbid ascetic, torturing himself to death, hating innocent diversion because it has the great merit of distracting the mind from melancholy brooding, looking upon natural passions as simply bad, and inculcating demeanour which would turn us all into celibate monks; pushing delicacy to the point at which it becomes confounded with pruriency; distrusting even the highest of blessings, love of sisters and friends, because they take us away from the service of the Being who, after all, does not require our services; consecrating poverty instead of trying to suppress it; and finally, renouncing the intellectual pursuits for which he had the most astonishing fitness, because geometry had no bearing on dogmatic theology. The devotion of a man to an ideal which, however imperfect, is neither base, sensual, nor anti-social, which implies a passionate devotion to some of the higher impulses of our nature, has so great a claim upon our reverence that we can forgive, and even love, Pascal. We cannot follow him without treason to our highest interests.

The point of view from which Pascal repels us is indicated in the common-sense comments upon the *Pensées* by Voltaire and Condorcet. We decline to stupefy ourselves. Drug yourself with holy water and masses, or be a brute beast. We reply, as the old Duchess of Marlborough replied to her doctor's statement that she must be blistered or die, 'I won't be blistered, and I won't die!' We won't be drugged and we won't be brute beasts. And to Pascal's appeal from the reason to the heart, we answer that it implies a fundamental error. The 'heart' is not another kind of reason—a co-ordinate faculty for discerning truth—but a name for emotions which are not reason at all. Least of all can it claim to pronounce that certain elements in our life are supernatural or intrusions from without. And yet the heart, if we are to use the word, implies something that we must take into account. It represents implicit judgments, for it determines the relative values of different passions and aims, and therefore does, in fact, supply principles which regulate our lives. Pascal's heart, for example, meant a conviction founded upon his own direct experience of the infinite superiority of the spiritual, as he would have said, to the temporal and sensual. Such

implicit judgments, and the morality in which they are embodied, are modified more or less directly by the adoption of new philosophical or scientific beliefs. We do not fear for a moment that in seeking for truth and applying the most rigid logical tests, we are endangering whatever is really sound in the judgments or valuable in the morality. A coherent and reliable philosophy would, we are fully assured, incorporate whatever may be sound in the beliefs and feelings which are instinctive rather than reasoned. But the possibility, or rather the certainty, of such a conflict imposes a responsibility upon his opponents. For, in the first place, it explains why persuasion does not go with conviction or exposure of fallacy lead to adoption of the truth. The clearest exposition of the logical error may only lead, as it led Pascal, to a revolt against reason; and the blind instinct will somehow assert itself as a matter of fact, and be an irreconcilable element until a satisfaction be provided for it in a more comprehensive and rational construction. Nor is the instinct, blind though it be, without its light. Its very existence affords a presumption, not that it is true, but that it is an imperfect effort to impress a truth. And this is, in fact, the reason which is impressed upon

us most forcibly by such a man as Pascal. He is himself, as he declared man to be in general, a kind of incarnate antinomy. As he brings the heart into hopeless conflict with reason; as he manages at once to exaggerate the baseness and the grandeur of human nature; as he urges alternately with extraordinary keenness two aspects of truth, and is forced to make them contradictory instead of complementary; as his moral position is on one side pure, elevating, and a standing rebuke to all the meaner tendencies of his generation, and yet, on the other, becomes morbid, perverse, and impracticable, because he has separated life into its incommensurable elements,—he leaves to us not a final solution but a problem: How to form a system which shall throughout be reasonable and founded upon fact, and yet find due place and judicious guidance for the higher elements, which he has really perverted in the effort to exaggerate their importance?

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